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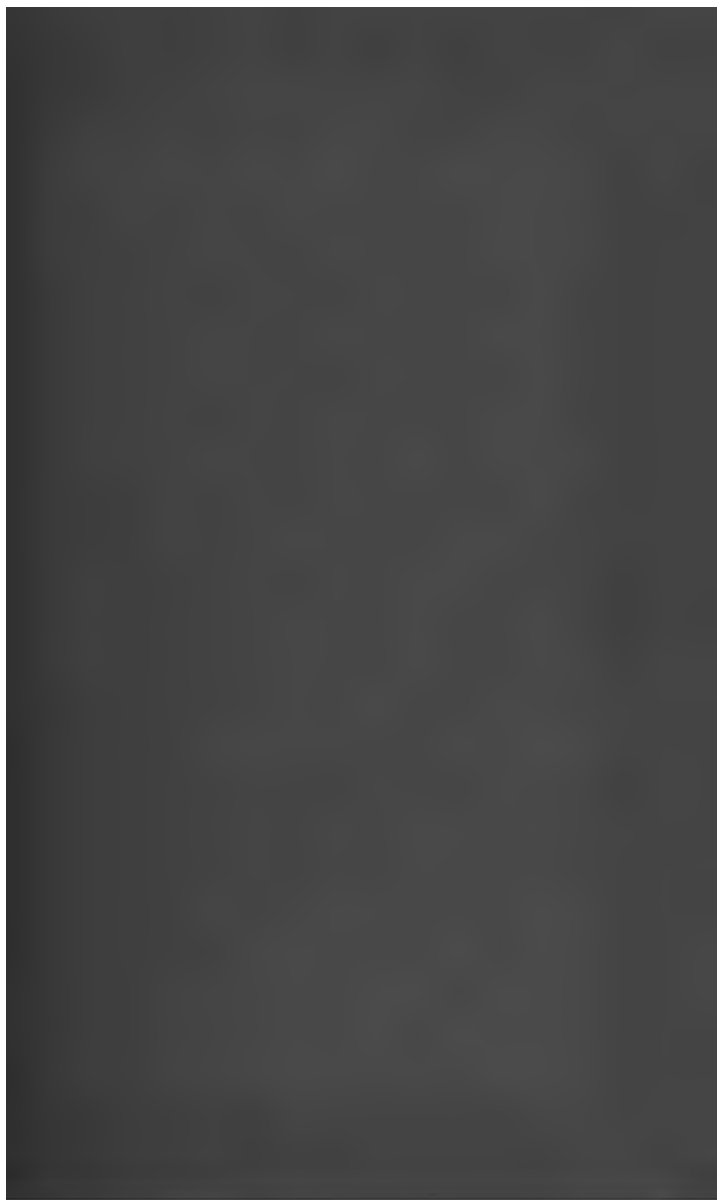
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HILARY S. MAGNA;

OR,

The Nearest Duty First.

" I bring thee cares, that thou mayest look to heaven ;
I bring thee fretful friends, that thou mayest train
Thy soul to patience : what thou deemest gain,
When closest wreathing chains around thy soul,
I rend from thine own bleeding heart in twain,
That He Who bought may have thy spirit whole—
Spurs that may give thee pain, but urge thee to the goal."

REV. I. WILLIAMS.

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HILARY S. MAGNA.

CHAPTER I.

ACQUIREMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS.

“ H, Kate! I want to speak to you before the rest come down; I am afraid I got into a scrape last night, and promised my mother's assistance without due consideration; you saw Euphine Silverton speaking to me just before the dancing began.”

“Yes,” answered her sister, “and I thought that while in such deep mourning for her father's recent death, she would have shown a better feeling in abstaining for a time from all gaiety.”

“Of course; but Kate dear, I want to tell you what I have done. I must be quick, as the others will be in to breakfast directly. I was talking to Wilton Foster, when she forced herself into the conversation, finally getting rid of him, not in the most ladylike manner, and then asked me if I thought my mother would allow her to call here, as she was anxious to enlist her sympathies to procure for her a situation either as governess or companion. Naturally I expressed my regret at her

having to leave home: she was quite ready to be consoled with, and in fact made out such a pitiable case that I felt obliged to say, I was sure my mother would be happy to do all in her power, upon which she requested to know when it would be most convenient for her to call, and I named luncheon to-day. Do you think mother will care?"

"No, I dare say not," said Kate, ringing for the urn, "only you should have consulted her; why did you not as she was in the room?"

"I did suggest it," said Mary, "but Miss Silverton seemed disinclined to broach the subject openly in the midst of company, she was anxious to go home, and had only remained to make this request to me privately. You know, Kate, our mother is always ready to assist every one, so I thought I might promise this much."

"Well, don't be nervous, only you had better mention it directly after breakfast; I suppose we none of us care particularly for Miss Silverton, but if it becomes a question of aid, I am sure our mother will not fail."

The foregoing conversation was held between two sisters just before the morning meal. The elder, Kate, was a tall elegant girl of twenty-two, with dark hair, and eyes fringed with long curling lashes, and a charming expression which, coupled with her piquante manner, rendered her irresistible. Bright and merry, she was the sunshine of the house, and her fiat on all subjects was considered infallible by her younger sister. Mary was more sedate and quiet, and though far less striking in appearance, she possessed one of those faces which unconsciously grow upon the beholder. Her large truthful brown eyes revealed such depth of thought, and the serenity of her features so much dignity and reticence; her hair

was of that peculiarly English colour, known to foreigners as brown cendré, and greatly admired by them.

But their father is at the door, newspaper in hand, therefore we must not linger over personal descriptions.

"Well, girls! how did you enjoy Mrs. Merton's soirée?"

"Oh, very much, papa," and a smile of amusement glanced over Kate's fair face.

The mother, who had replaced her daughter at the head of the table, answered quickly, forestalling the response she saw on her lips, dictating thus the opinion she chose should be adopted by all.

"No one could possibly do otherwise than enjoy themselves, where the whole thought and attentions of the hostess are concentrated upon her guests' pleasure. Mrs. Merton is not a lady either by birth or education, but her genuine kindness and honest admission that she is unequal to the position in which she finds herself, must atone for many deficiencies."

She paused as a slight hacking cough was heard, followed by the entrance of the youngest son, thus making the morning party complete.

"Ah, my boy! tired with dissipation," was his father's greeting.

"I assure you," said Kate, "Ernest was quite an important personage last night; Mrs. Merton handed him to the cosiest of sofas, and devoted herself exclusively to him for nearly an hour."

"Which time she occupied in giving me good advice, unnecessary in my case, but all the same kindly meant; I really do appreciate her," he added with a peculiar smile.

"What was she saying to you?" said his mother passing his cup.

"She began by alluding in a nervous sort of way, to my bad health, and then came a condolence, in the middle of which she interrupted herself to pay me an elaborate compliment, but you must imagine that and spare my blushes. Then she advised me, as the winter season approached, to be sure and wear flannel. There was no mistake so great as abjuring flannel in this changeable, foggy climate; she herself was as strong as a horse, and had been brought up hardy, therefore might do so with impunity, but it was quite different with delicate people. Next she darted off rather suddenly into an eulogium upon dear Mrs. Howard, and interrupted it quite as unexpectedly to conjure me in the most pathetic manner to walk in strong boots. 'Believe me, my dear Mr. Ernest, a dry foot is half the constitution, therefore pray be careful about your boots.' I duly promised, and she wound up by apologizing for looking after me, evidently thinking you, my dear mother, too refined and ethereal for the task."

"Poor Mrs. Merton," said Mrs. Howard, "she is so grateful for any attention, that we may well overlook all minor peculiarities; I hope you will never ill-naturedly amuse yourselves at her expense."

"She is too unassuming and kind-hearted for any one to do that," said Mary, "but how came she to be placed so out of her sphere?"

"The old story, my love," said her father, "Mr. Merton is, and always has been, very rich, that is, always has been, since a fortunate speculation, at the outset of his career, multiplied his means ad infinitum. His becoming the millionaire of his family, caused all his relations to toady him to disgust, so that he determined to strike a blow at the whole set, and therefore married a good-looking provincial girl, the daughter of the person

of whom he had rented country lodgings, during a summer holiday. It was a silly thing to do, and he might have repented it in a much greater degree than he has cause for, as she is a good, honest, true-hearted woman, and sensitively alive to kindness. Mr. Merton and myself are so constantly thrown together in business relations, that visiting follows as a necessity, otherwise she is not the person I should choose my family to associate with, but remember all, I expect you to treat her with respect."

"And her many good qualities so far outweigh her deficiencies," added Mrs. Howard, "that I am sure we all think well of her, although I admit she often miscalls words so ludicrously it is difficult to repress a smile."

"Potography for instance," whispered Kate to Ernest, and the laugh was irresistible.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard were high-principled consistent members of the Church. Mr. Howard was engaged in a flourishing commercial house, which engrossed his attention, and occupied almost all his time; he was essentially a man of business, punctual in the counting-house, strict and careful in accounts, supervising his books personally, and exacting close explanations upon all points connected with figures, remarking as he frequently did, that if clerks were better looked after by their employers, there would be less temptation to embezzlement, as it was undoubtedly a great trial to a man's honesty to feel he could make use of sums passing through his hands, without any one, for the time, being the wiser. Charles, the eldest son, was associated with his father in the city, but from having married one, who in all her feelings, tastes, and amusements, was somewhat the reverse of his own family, as time advanced saw less and less of them, so that the

distance at first only felt, and hardly perceptible, was gradually increasing.

We have reserved Ernest for the last, not only as the youngest, but because he was the most loved and cherished by all the family. Parents, brother, and sisters, all were willing and eager to give way to him and smooth every difficulty; each tried their best to make his life as pleasant as might be, and that on account of his failing health. He was constitutionally very delicate, and circumstances had increased an original want of strength. When quite a boy he had been thrown from his horse, a broken limb was the consequence, and during all the illness, fever, and weakness entailed by such an accident, the naturally fragile frame became more and more reduced. Directly there was amendment of one ailment, another supervened; thus for three years the pale anxious mother watched her darling's couch, now hoping, now fearing, but never giving way, ever full of trust in the mercy of God.

At length a decided improvement took place; weeks by the sea, and months in the pure country air, with first-rate advice and good nursing, seemed by God's blessing, quite to set him up; he became more vigorous and healthful, his spirits always good, rose to the usual pitch of boyish fun and frolic, and hope again chased afar the anxious solicitude that would creep in. But the bright change was transient; as years stole on, doubts started up which at first the parents could not face, was it possible he had received some internal injury? In that question the difficulty was solved, there lay the explanation of baffled skill and undiscovered reasons, the delicate action of the heart had sustained a shock, which ultimately was to show itself with terrible certainty, but at the present time he was only eighteen, the symptoms

were few, and the fond mother tried hard, by plausibly accounting for them to banish the undefined dread. Still she could not but fear when she recollected that from his birth he had been ailing, and unable to join in the active sports common to his years, and that after his accident, and his recovery, he always seemed fading away; first he would lag behind the rest, following only slowly with the old people, then even that produced panting breath and beating heart; at last he could not rest on the left side without pain almost amounting to suffocation.

The family practitioner was called in, looked grave, cleared his throat, hesitated, fell back upon the delicacy of his constitution; he certainly had a nervous affection of the heart, but begged they would not be alarmed; he would in all probability grow out of it. Lads of his age always ailed in some way; a trip to the continent next year would set all right, at all events the fine summer weather would produce active results; and again he declared there was no danger. He should have been honest and said no immediate danger, for he knew he was deceiving them when he gave this opinion; he felt the loved one must die, but had not nerve for the communication to those whom he had known for the last twenty years, and whom he respected so highly.

Did the mother believe the coward report? At first yes; hope led her on; what Mr. Bird said was so plausible, and in it were some grains of truth; it may be that in her inmost heart she feared, but also she hoped, and hope is God's own gift to weak man, sent in mercy when the battle rages fiercest, and courage ebbs, and the heart grows weary in the fight; it is one proof of His great love, that to each one is vouchsafed this supporting help in time of trouble.

Youth also was in her darling's favour, and medical skill had taken such giant strides during the last fifty years that who could tell? Some wonderful cure might be in existence even for a heart disease. Thus she tried to argue herself into fresh courage, never however, for one moment forgetting that the issues of life and death are in the hands of the ALMIGHTY, Who is the disposer of events, and that He doeth whatsoever seemeth Him fit.

In the course of the morning Mary had broached the subject which had so troubled her mind at breakfast, and found her mother was already cognizant of all but the luncheon arrangement, as Mrs. Charles had bespoken her mother-in-law's sympathies for her friend Miss Silverton; so that when the young lady was announced, she rose to greet her kindly, assuring her of every assistance in her power, but "In order to be of real use," she continued, "I must be taken, at least partially, into your confidence."

Miss Silverton was apparently quite willing. Her father's death, she said, leaving them so much worse off than they had any reason to expect, was the immediate cause of her difficulty; her mother knew nothing of money matters; it was obvious they had for years been living far beyond their income, therefore real poverty stared them in the face; there was a small provision for Mrs. Silverton, a mere pittance, quite insufficient for two, consequently she must go out into the world: was it not hard? Being by birth and position a lady, she ought not to be subject to such degradation.

Mrs. Howard refused to acquiesce in this view, admitting however, there were allowances to be made for her disappointment and disinclination for the task; but having acknowledged it a duty,

she must face it bravely, and try to do her best, which would not be achieved by sitting down in despair, and using hard misplaced words.

Euphine flushed up considerably; she was evidently unused to being schooled, but restrained her rising wrath, in consideration that in this family lay her chief hope of success. Mrs. Howard watched her for a few minutes, as some of the attentions due to a guest from her daughters were exchanged, concerned to observe the contracted brow and impatience of control, and at once making up her mind how to act.

"My dear Miss Silverton, you must forgive me if I speak plainly, and try to believe I do it solely for your benefit; to assist you effectually, I must go rather more deeply into the subject than I fear you will like."

Euphine bowed stiffly, and muttered something about beggars not being choosers, but that she was ready to answer any questions Mrs. Howard might be pleased to ask. The luncheon progressed silently and slowly, Kate and Mary glancing significantly across the table at each other, reading in their mother's face the unpleasantness she anticipated.

"Will you tell me which position you aspire to fill,—companion or governess?"

"Pray do not talk of it as a choice, unless you mean of evils. I suppose the former would be preferable, at least less of a drudgery."

"A companion, my dear, is not a desirable post; those who are blessed with health and strength would scarcely need one, and of those who are alone in the world, or so exacting that none of their own relations can live with them, I fear you would soon tire. It seems to me you are wrong at starting, setting aside the difficulty of procuring such a post."

"Well," said Euphine, "I have thought over

all that, and in fact only named the former in case you should know of anything very desirable. So I suppose governess it must be; ah me! that ever I, Euphine Silverton, should live to be obliged to teach stupid little children their letters."

"I think you will find the actual hearing and setting lessons the least important part of your duties," said Mrs. Howard.

She looked rather astonished for a moment, then her face cleared.

"Oh, you mean it will be so much more worrying when it comes to music and singing; but on those points, I assure you, I am very strong; all the talent I possess resolves itself into the piano; you shall hear me when we go up stairs; I am so very fond of it, and shall not mind that part, always supposing my pupils are not of the most stupid, against which I shall guard by not undertaking the very young; on that score there is no fear."

"No," said Mrs. Howard, "I never thought there was; your musical reputation has reached me, but you entirely mistake my meaning. Let your thoughts wander back to your own childhood; it is not so very far removed, and I am sure you will agree with me, that books form a very small portion of that, which is of so much importance to us all—education. Think how many are the duties to be inculcated, the faults to be reproved, tempers to be curbed, good impulses to be fostered, bad ones to be restrained; indeed, it is a great responsibility, and one you may not enter into without due consideration."

Euphine's looks evinced her annoyance, and addressing Kate, she asked her if she did not think her mamma was trying to frighten her with the magnitude of the task, thus hoping to cause a diversion, and by forcing the girls to take a part in it,

to divert the conversation into the usual topics of the day.

Mrs. Howard felt much displeased ; she was trying her utmost to assist this girl's future career, and had glanced at the subject somewhat deeply, fearing the other was about to undertake a serious post in a spirit of volatile worldliness ; she saw that Euphine if she had dared, would have laughed in her face ; however, she felt that with a person so habitually heedless, some one must urge the necessity of serious thought. A long discourse followed, in which the lady's patience was sorely tried ; at length she asked what mental power her companion thought a governess most required ?

"Me! Oh, pray Mrs. Howard, don't think I have given long days and nights of care to the subject, because you will be quite deceived ; I know I must do something to obtain the necessary £. s. d., and being a lady, there is no other way open to me ; I can read and write, I know some geography and more history, I can play and sing, and draw to a certain extent ; I am a pretty good French scholar, that is, I can always find sufficient to pass muster in society, when I meet a foreigner ; the same with German ; and I really think that is a list which will drag me through as a successful candidate, when I find a family in want of such an incumbrance."

"But have you really thought nothing of studying each individual character entrusted to you, and forming each mind to grow up a good useful responsible Christian ? as those are the practical points we call education."

"No, indeed, I never supposed they would come within my province."

"Within whose then ?"

"Oh, I don't know ; parents or clergy or some

one. Why, Mrs. Howard, all this would require such watchful thought, it would be an unceasing care."

"You are right, it would exact all this and much more, humble prayer to fit you, and energy to carry you through; continuous untiring energy would, I believe, be the secret of success, added to self-control, never allowing a weakness to usurp the place of an acknowledged duty, thus ensuring vigour of mind and body. If you are to direct the young, enter on the work with industry and energy, and you will soon discover the manifold duties it demands."

Euphine looked decidedly annoyed; she considered that Mrs. Howard was lecturing her unjustifiably and undeservedly; that her attainments and accomplishments quite fitted her for the post; that all this overwrought fuss about such high-flown virtues was superfluous, being a part of her High Church prejudices. Looking at her watch, she rose rather abruptly, saying she had promised to call on Mrs. Charles. After so decided a move, there was nothing more to be said, so presenting her hand, she thanked Mrs. Howard for receiving her, adding, "If you hear of any vacancy, I hope you will kindly remember my object, notwithstanding my presumed deficiencies, as after all, the want of those qualities to which you attach so much importance, may not be an insurmountable obstacle to every one, and the responsibility would rest with those who engage me, and not with your recommendation."

The lady detained her hand to beg she would forgive anything that might have displeased her, and to believe that whatever she had said was only with a view of aiding her, in her novel position; thus they parted, neither very well pleased with the other. Euphine, glad to throw off all burdensome

thoughts engendered by the visit, made the best of her way to Portland Place, to drive out and amuse herself for the rest of the day, with her friend par excellence Mrs. Charles Howard; certain of not being worried with any of those extreme notions of excellence which in her estimation rendered the elder lady such a bore.

The daughter-in-law presented certainly as great a contrast to her husband's mother as could well be imagined, and piqued herself upon her superiority to all those superstitions which she was in the habit of declaring reigned rampant throughout the Howard family. She was decidedly a handsome woman, tall and striking, the expression of her large dark eyes alone marring her beauty; if the graces of the mind had only corresponded with those of the person, Charles would certainly have drawn a matrimonial prize. But alas! she was not one the gentle mother could unreservedly welcome into the bosom of her family. They had met while on a visit in Worcestershire, at the house of a mutual friend, and had been married after a few weeks' blind infatuation. "Marry in haste, and repent at leisure" is in most cases true, as upon reflection we find all the old proverbs are, for they were generally the summing up of a life's experience in a few words, at a time when the low standard of education rendered persons dependent upon oral instruction. Charles soon found that his beautiful bride possessed a most violent and irritable temper, over which from habitual indulgence, she had little or no control; this, however, was hardly worse than the envy which was the bane of her own life, and of those connected with her. Distinguished in appearance as she undoubtedly was, few thought of attaching themselves to her when the merry Kate and quiet Mary were near, which added to her dislike of her sisters-in-

law, who were so different to herself, as she well knew, although she could not discover in what their superiority consisted. How should she? when she never tested herself by close self-examination, or breathed a silent fervent prayer for that humility which is the most difficult of all Christian virtues, the special grace which shone so conspicuously in her, who should be every woman's pattern, and was pronounced above all "blessed."

Charles himself was a straightforward man of business, passing the greater part of his time in the city, and willing to concede almost too much for a quiet home. They had one little daughter, between two and three years old, who was a constant source of contention, for whenever Mrs. Charles failed to discover any fault with the way in which she was treated by her husband's family, she could always bring forward some neglect offered to her child; a proof of this had occurred that very day. Ernest had paid his sister-in-law a visit, and after exchanging greetings had asked for little Fanny, who was a great favourite with her uncle; much to his astonishment, Julia at once assumed a haughty and aggrieved manner, bewailing the family neglect of herself and child; the dear little girl might have been dying, for aught any one cared in Harley Street.

"Oh! was she ill then?" he asked.

"Ill! any one interested would have known by instinct of the bad cold she had on her chest; Bird had been there that afternoon, and talked of leeches, unless there was a decided improvement later in the day."

"I am sure, Julia, if you had sent to my mother she would have been here long ago; none of us knew she was ill."

"Sent to Mrs. Howard indeed! Most grand-

mamas with common feeling would not wait to be sent for."

Ernest could never hear his mother attacked, and keep his temper; he answered sharply, which drew forth a retort, and so they parted. It was not the first time discord had been promoted through the medium of the little girl.

"I met Mr. Fordholme just now, my love," said Mr. Howard, bustling in to a late dinner as usual, "he wishes to see you, and will call to-morrow about some protégé of yours and his, I did not understand whom; when he accosted me, I put my hand in my pocket, thinking he wanted a subscription for something or other; he laughed at such a proof of his begging propensities, and being a man of tact, left me almost directly, seeing, I imagine, that I was both tired and hungry."

"Was the person's name Betsey Dawes, papa?" said Kate.

"Yes, I dare say, I think it was." He would have assented thus to any other name she might have hazarded.

"No, Kate, impossible," said Mary, "she is gone by this time; I wonder how she gets on in a lady's house; it must be all so strange and new to her, brought up among the very poor; I feel quite proud, a girl of our recommendation should do so well, although mamma always looks doubtful about her; confess now, mother dear, she is a better girl than you gave her credit for."

"If she answers your expectation, in her place, I will gladly do so, but remember she has had no trial yet, one cannot feel safe about her, she is perfectly well behaved, civil, and lavish in promises I admit, but if at the present moment duty and inclination clashed, I should tremble for her; I fear there is a spot in her heart, which, under certain circumstances, might bring forth much evil, I

mean the canker worm of vanity, which spreading, will crush out and choke all better aspirations. She has no stability. But do not look so disappointed, Mary, for now that she is removed from the influences of her worthless lover, and also from the bad habits of her home, we will depend entirely upon the good in her disposition which will all be brought out and fostered."

The two girls had taken a deep interest in this Betsey Dawes. One day walking in the park with their maid, they had found her sitting on the ground, sobbing in a perfect agony, they addressed her with kind words and pitying looks, and soon restored her equanimity; she told them she had rushed there to have a good cry for her father, who it appeared was a chartist, a bad low fellow, who had mixed himself up prominently with the evil spirits of his class, during a time of great excitement among them, and had attended meetings and public-house associations advocating their fallacious rights, until he had lost work and money, so that absolute want stared his family in the face, their miseries appeared now to have come to a climax, as the little furniture and goods they possessed had that day been seized and themselves turned out from their lodgings, and as Betsey told them, there was no hope left but the union.

The truth of her statement had been ascertained, the man had again got work, he and his wife appeared debased, drunken, and good-for-nothing people, whom it was impossible to help. Kate and Mary determined to snatch Betsey from the certain misery of such a lot, and had interested their curate in her, sending her to the evening school, and trying to implant good notions in her hitherto untrained mind; so far all had gone well, and Mr. Fordholme had obtained for her a subordinate place with a relation of his own in the

country, where the girls hoped she now was, and that they need consequently have no further anxiety about her. However, as she had occupied so much of their thoughts and time, they could not quite dismiss the idea that she was connected with the subject of Mr. Fordholme's intended visit on the morrow.

Ernest always retired early; by the end of the day he was quite worn out, and that night as he was going to bed he suddenly remembered his niece's cold, returning at once to the drawing-room, he said, "I quite forgot before, I ought to have told you, mother, Fanny is not at all well, and Julia is exceedingly angry that you have not found it out and been to see her." I am sorry to have been so negligent, but I have been writing to Hilary to-night, and that made me forget everything else.

Mrs. Howard placed her hand upon his shoulder, saying, "Tell me, my son, what is the matter?" she was always composed with him, never showing the least excitement of manner, even on great occasions.

"I believe it is a severe cold. Bird has been there and talked of blisters, leeches, or some horrors, if he saw no improvement."

She turned to her husband, "I will have a cab and go," ringing the bell as she spoke.

"Not to-night, my love, it is so late."

"Yes; I had better go," she urged.

Mr. Howard gave the necessary orders for cab and servant to attend her.

"Surely there were plenty of people round Julia," said Mary, "if anything serious were the matter she could send."

"Yes, if she felt so inclined," observed Kate, "only perhaps mamma had better go, she will not stay long, and if she does not appear they may think it unkind."

"Or feel it so, Kate, that is the point, people's thoughts, unless coupled with justice, are of little importance. You had both better remain with your father, and if I am likely to be detained, I will let you know."

In less than half an hour however, she returned, the child was sleeping peacefully in her little cot; she certainly had a severe cold, but nothing alarming, nor requiring extreme measures; a few days' care would put all right. Charles had been so touched by his mother's attention as almost to have carried her up stairs in his gratitude, even his wife had condescended to say, "she was sorry her exaggeration had been the cause of needlessly bringing her out so late at night."

CHAPTER II.

HOME CONFERENCES.

"KATE," said Mrs. Howard to her daughter, leading the way to her own little boudoir, "you and I must shut ourselves up together for a time, as I have received a letter by this morning's post which requires our closest attention. It is from Arthur, who will be in town in a few days. He has written to me rather than to you for various reasons, principally to claim my intercession: he is naturally anxious his happiness should not be unnecessarily delayed; six months' mourning he thinks quite sufficient for old Sir John: in short, my love, he pleads sensibly for an immediate marriage, what say you? Can my child make up her mind to be at once transplanted to Marston-le-grange, which is all in order awaiting its mistress?"

"Mother, you know me better than to suppose I should raise up unmeaning obstacles as the termination of our engagement draws near; I love him too dearly for that: but I cannot help shrinking at the thought, I have been so happy with you, that I cannot hope to be the same in another home. You have always taught us that sorrow must come, sooner or later, and that this world is but a place of trial; as I have had none comparatively here, who can tell how much may be reserved for me there! As a little girl I know I used to dread growing up, because all people seemed to have some great grief."

"True, my love, most true; sorrow must come, it is the common lot, and what child of Adam shall escape? But is there no strong Arm to lean upon, none in Whom to put our 'whole trust and confidence?' Where is your faith, my child?"

"Ah, mother dear! you have proof of my weakness, and think how different my duties will be, how many cares will devolve upon me, how much responsibility. I may well hesitate."

"I would not have you lightly undertake what must always be a very serious consideration; but sufficient unto our weakness will be the strength granted, if we seek it aright; also, my love, you do not go forth alone, he whom you have chosen, as we hope both wisely and well, is one to second all your endeavours in doing right with help from above. If I were not so strongly impressed with this conviction, perhaps I should pause in urging his present wishes upon you."

"Yes, he is so wise and good, so superior to all others, true, I can always go to him for counsel and advice. Yes, mother, you are right, his perfections make all the difference."

Mrs. Howard smiled, observing how differently things were viewed when her daughter's mind re-

verted to her *fiancé*, who was in every way worthy of her. They had been engaged some months: it was a match singularly satisfactory on all points. Sir Arthur Musgrave was a man of high principle, clever, and very rich; he had succeeded the old uncle mentioned above, in his title and estates, and appealed now to the family to hasten his wedding, urging with great felicity the many disadvantages consequent upon long engagements, winding up with the remark, "that having neither parents nor guardians, his solitary position should plead all the more strongly in his favour."

Kate mused long and deeply, apparently she had sufficient food for thought; at length she said, "May I see Arthur's letter?" Mrs. Howard put it in her hand. "He does not specify any particular time, so I suppose he means some two or three months hence, that you know is much earlier than we anticipated."

"Yes, my love, it is; I must answer him by this day's post, will you trust me to word your consent?"

Kate took no heed of the question, except that it seemed to have decided some latent hesitation, for she spoke at once seriously and decidedly. "Mother, there is one subject I must broach, although I have hitherto shrunk from touching on it, feeling how close it is to your heart; now at the risk of paining you I must do so. I am adverting to dear Ernest's health; I want to know if he is really in danger? and if so, how can I bear to have gaiety and rejoicing going on for me, and he sinking slowly but surely into the grave? Mamma, this should be clearly understood; our darling Ernest! do you think his death is near?"

"God forbid!" broke hastily from Mrs. Howard's lips, as they echoed the thought of her heart. "Kate," she said, "with an organic disease, one

must always dread ; but remember, love, God has in mercy veiled the future, therefore we may not speculate too closely upon what it hides ; the present alone belongs to us, the future to the All-Wise, and in His gracious hands we may well trust it. My darling is not worse, nay, I hope is better, stronger, than when you and Arthur were first engaged ; therefore if we suggest his health as an impediment, your lover will think we are trifling. Believe me, Kate, when a young girl is about to leave her home, there are always these drawbacks ; so many things start up, seeming to make it almost an imperative duty to remain in the old position, and wait a more convenient season for entering upon a new one. I shall miss you much, my love, and poor Mary will be sadly at a loss for her best companion and friend. Ernest and your father will listen vainly to catch your merry laugh, our circle will have less of bright sunshine, for Mary is peculiarly quiet and sedate for so young a girl ; but we are all willing to give up our claims to ensure your happiness, which I trust rests on a good foundation. However, I see you would like more time to consider the subject, and talk it over with your sister, so I shall merely beg Arthur to pay us a visit in passing through town, and receive a personal reply. Will not that be best ?”

“Thank you, my own mother ; you always know exactly how to solve our difficulties,” and a hearty kiss sealed the conference.

The two girls were discussing the news in Ernest’s sanctum, they never excluded him from their counsils, when a servant came in to say Betsy Dawes was below, and wanted to speak to Miss Kate.

“It cannot be Betsy Dawes,” they exclaimed simultaneously, “she is gone.”

“Yes, Miss, it is, and she is crying bitterly.”

"Let us go to her in the study," said Mary, "something must be very wrong; she should have been in Sussex four days ago."

"Why Betsy, we thought you were in your new place; sit down and tell me why you are here."

Poor Betsy was sobbing and shuffling about in the most uncomfortable manner. For some time all her efforts at explanation were unintelligible; at length, with an hysterical sort of gasp she began: "Oh, if you please, Miss Kate, his reverence is so angry because I did not go to my place, but I went out pleasuring just that night instead; if you will let me tell you all about it, you will see how it was. The day that I was to have started, Tom Harris came to take me to a party: the blacksmith's foreman, who is Tom's friend, was married, and ever so much fine company invited, quite a grand set-out, not a bit in the common way; for the bride's brother has just come home from the gold diggings, and paid for all. When I was asked to go I said no, at first, for I was to start by the train; and Tom got angry, and said if fine folks was more to me than him, I was welcome to them, only then I was not the girl he took me for; and if I could not go to a bit of a party once in a way, I might as well be a black slave in Uncle Tom's Cabin, and a deal more. There was to be a dance, and a fine supper; such grand doings, all like gentlefolks," said Betsy, warming with her subject, as the festivities presented themselves anew. "The farriery was decorated with boughs and greens, and the work-things cleared away, only a few horse-shoes made quite bright hung up here and there over the dirty marks, and a great bit of oilcloth nailed down the middle, so as you could dance on the little round paving stones; they did not hurt much; and we had Jerry the forge boy to wait on us, and Tom was the admiration of them all when

he danced the college hornpipe and the double shuffle. It wasn't to be supposed I should go just that very day, now was it, Miss?" Here Betsy paused for breath, and Kate was able to edge in a remark.

"Indeed I cannot find any excuse for you; Mr. Fordholme has been at a great deal of trouble to get you what he considers an advantageous place, and we have all done our best to fit you out and send you respectably; my mother will be very vexed," and as fresh difficulties presented themselves Kate assumed an injured tone. "How could you disappoint us all so: and now some days have passed, the lady has no doubt got another servant; besides, who would trust a girl in their service who sacrifices duty to pleasure in such a wilful way? But wait here while I go and speak to my mother."

When Mrs. Howard came back with Kate they found Betsy crying most piteously, now that her evening's enjoyment had passed, and could be coolly contemplated, it did not seem worth the price. Mrs. Howard paused for her to compose herself, and then pointed out her error, gravely yet kindly, adding, "If we do not perform our nearest duty first, we shall never clearly see our path. The money had been given you to start with by the first train on Wednesday morning, and no temptation however attractive, should have induced you to remain."

"If you please, ma'am, I did mean to attend to my duty, as Mr. Fordholme had been telling me, and I said as much to Tom, who became cross, and talked so loud he made me cry. He said I had promised to be true to him before ever I heard of going away, and first promise stands first; that it was all very fine to talk of duty, but he supposed I owed something to him, until at last I really did

think I ought to give way just a little ; I got into a muddle like, and did not seem to know whether I ought to consider Tom or the lady."

"If we earnestly strive to do right, Betsy, we shall always have a way made clear to us," said Mrs. Howard. "You were puzzled because you wilfully put aside what you knew was right, and tried to think you owed a first duty to your lover, who, if he had really cared for you, would have assisted you to keep faith with your future mistress."

The girl began to exhibit a little of her usual hardihood, answering in rather a pert tone. "Indeed, ma'am, but I did stand up for my place, only Tom had set his heart on taking me ; we had some words about it, he said he need not beg and pray of me so, he could get plenty to keep company with who would be glad to go to such a grand party, there was others to be had for the asking. I know what he meant, Susan Price is always a laying herself out to catch him, and would have jumped at the chance, and I should have lost Tom altogether," poor Betsy's sobs bursting out afresh as the idea presented itself, or perhaps from some other cause.

"I don't understand," said Mrs. Howard after a pause, "why you have been all this time without letting us know, or you might even have gone the next day."

"If you please, ma'am, I was ashamed to come, and I was afraid to go after the proper time. Mr. Fordholme came just now to mother's, and was so angry ; she happened to be cross and spoke up for me, telling him if he made such a fuss about the place he might send somebody else to fill it, for he seemed to think the poor were made for nothing but work, work, like a horse in a mill ; so he went away, saying he would come some other time, when she was better able to listen. Mother had been

drinking a little this morning, that made her worse, or she would not have spoken to him so : altogether, I was so miserable, I thought I would come and ask Miss Kate to do something for me ; maybe the lady would take me even now, if you would please to write, ma'am," dropping a curtsey.

"How can I, Betsy, in the face of such a fault? Besides, you may do the same again, or anything else Tom advocates, if he is so irresistible."

"Oh no, I'm sure I'll try; and I shall be glad to get away, in particular as we are not friends now; if he chose to sit by Susan Price all supper-time, that was bad enough," and Betsy's eyes glistened, although she wore a defiant look; "but when he kissed her before my face, I up and said I'd done with him, and I hope I shall never see him again. I wish I could get any sort of a place in the country, I don't care how hard I work; I'll go for anything, if you like, ma'am, only to get away. Oh, won't you speak to Mr. Fordholme, and get him to let me go!" and the sobs burst out worse than ever.

At length, after many penitent promises, Betsy was sent into the kitchen, and Mrs. Howard agreed to consider the subject and do all she could for her. As the curate had not called during the day, she sat down after dinner to write him a note containing all particulars; having despatched it, she suddenly became aware of her husband's absence, asking where he was gone.

"You must have been very deeply engrossed with your clerical billet, mother," said Ernest, "not to have heard a most humble message from Dodson, begging Mr. Howard would see him at once privately."

"The city clerk!" she said: "how unusual for him to come at this hour; I hope nothing is wrong?"

"Oh, no, *mother*, don't be uneasy; my father

grumbled at being roused from his nap, and finally went to speak with him in the dining-room: it is all right, depend upon it."

And so it proved when Mr. Howard rejoined them, only the result of his clerk's communication was a hasty decision to start next morning for Liverpool.

"So who will stay away from early service to give me a good breakfast? for I must be off betimes. My love, it will make no difference to the dinner we contemplated for Tuesday. Girls, you will have to go the first thing to-morrow to inquire after little Fanny, so invite Mrs. Charles, and if she should be engaged, make it Wednesday; she is rather testy, I find, fancying herself slighted, which I am sure is one of her whims."

"Oh, yes, Mary, go and smooth her down for Tuesday. However, there is one comfort, if she shows her teeth I can take refuge with Arthur; for he can make even the magnificent Julia behave herself!" said Ernest, who could not get on with his beautiful sister-in-law, there was always some skirmish between them.

Upon the arrival of Kate and Mary in Portland Place next morning, Julia affected great surprise, declaring some most untoward event must have occurred, "or they certainly would not have missed matins." Mary tried to parry the attack, by saying it was not very wonderful they should come to inquire for their niece; they had all been so sorry to have neglected her; Ernest had retraced his steps after taking leave of them for the night, to confess how remiss he had been. One reason of their early visit was Fanny's health, their mother had thought Julia unnecessarily alarmed.

"Certainly the dear child is better, her cold has given way to prompt treatment, consequently my fears are allayed; still I am sure anxiety for my

darling is not considered by you sufficient cause for neglecting a service, there must be some ulterior reason."

Kate did not choose to notice the sneering attack, therefore turning to her brother she said abruptly, "Papa has started for Liverpool, you will hear all particulars from Dodson, who was closeted with him a long time last evening. I believe there is nothing wrong," she continued, in answer to Charles's look of surprise; "it is some business connected with a Peruvian dollar bond which was missed in the winter, and my father thought he should be in time to forward advices by the 'Petrel,' which sails at once; he might have his journey for nothing, but also he might be in time: this is a message for you."

Charles shook his head, fearing there was no such luck as hearing any more of that affair, and prepared to start at once, anxious to know all the head clerk could tell him.

Kate went on addressing Julia: "My father and mother hope you are disengaged on Tuesday for a seven o'clock dinner."

An ominous frown was gathering, from which she augured no favourable reception for her invitation: she might even have doubted if it had been heard, for her sister-in-law rushed to the door calling out "Charles, Charles, don't think of going until we have had some talk together, there is so much to arrange this morning." Returning leisurely to her seat, she condescended at length to consider the request; she really hardly knew what answer to send, her health at the present time was so delicate; the late worry about Fanny had been too much for her; she had half determined upon giving up invitations altogether, adding with the most amusing inconsistency, they were engaged one night, she forgot which, to the Turnors, but it

did not much signify, as her absence was of no moment, and the whole thing was a great fatigue.

Kate flushed up, and looked so provoked, that Mary thought it best to explain her father had particularly enforced both last night, and before starting, that all others were to give place to Julia's engagements; if Tuesday was inconvenient, she was to name her own day, they could on no account do without her, as she very well knew. Upon which assurance the cloud disappeared, being replaced by a gratified smile. She rung the bell for fresh toast and coffee, saying they must have snatched a very hasty breakfast so early, and had better finish now, it would be a good opportunity for tasting Reed's orange marmalade, of which she was so proud. Only too pleased to hail the change, they all laughed and joked merrily over the meal, until Arthur's expected visit was mentioned, which was unfortunate for the newly restored harmony, as Julia did not choose to uphold the projected match.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed, evincing extreme surprise by the interjection, "coming again!" At that moment her husband looked in before leaving. "Would you believe it, Charles, Sir Arthur Musgrave is coming to stay again in Harley Street!"

"I am heartily glad to hear it; good news, eh, Kate? But if you have anything to say to me, my dear, be quick, for I must be off."

He was in too great a hurry to observe how he had committed himself.

"Oh, well, perhaps you had better go at once, I will manage all by myself."

The girls smiled, thinking there was little doubt of that fact. Julia went on with her animadversion.

"I must say it is not well for handsome men to be dangling about with young girls, as has been

the fashion latterly at your house, although I suppose, now that he has at last declared himself, the engagement will be made public, which should have been done long ago if I had been your mother. There are so many reasons against its having been kept so close, and if he really is in earnest, I do not see the wisdom of it, placing you and your family in quite a wrong position; for instance, most of his connections will be leaving town as the season is over, and it is giving them no opportunity of calling upon you, even had they wished it, which as he is rich, I presume some might."

"Thank you," interrupted Kate, "if they paid me the compliment, only on the score of Arthur's riches, I can dispense with it."

"Yes, it is all very well taking that high tone now, but if you should become one of the family, it would be awkward to be slighted by the most influential members."

"I don't quite understand, Julia," said Mary, "why you insinuate a doubt of Kate's being gladly welcomed by all the Musgrave family. My mother did not wish the engagement noised abroad directly it was made for various reasons; one was that they might have time and opportunity to judge if they were suited to each other, independent of old Sir John's death making it incumbent upon us all to be silent for a time, as such a moment seemed hardly the one for rejoicing, considering how much Arthur benefited by his demise. But since it has been announced, Kate has received visits and notes, and congratulations from all parts, and I am sure all his family are charmed with her."

"Oh, doubtless," was the answer, "but you see, Mary, I am so little in the confidence of my family, that I am ignorant of all the honours heaped upon them; perhaps there is a secret on your own score,

which will only be told me when it is stale to every stranger."

Was it anger or the crimson of conscience which so suddenly dyed the fair face? for one second she recoiled, as one does at an unexpected blow, but when she spoke, her words were gentle as ever, protesting if Julia implied any engagement she was exceedingly mistaken.

That lady tossed her head, and sat leaning back in her chair, with a self-complacent smile on her lip, twisting round and round the golden serpent on her wrist, muttering something about not being quite blind, her voice growing in distinctness, as she asserted the fact that clerical flirts were the worst to deal with; however, that last might be a harsh term, possibly she was groping in the dark, for why should not one sister's *affaire de cœur* be kept back for a season, as well as the other's, at which point she was indignantly interrupted by Mary, who from long experience knew the best way to treat such a mood was to take the bull by the horns.

"I cannot sit by and hear you talk in that absurd way, Julia; I defy you to point out any such thing as decided attentions on Mr. S. Magna's part. I name him because I will not pretend ignorance of your inuendo. He is always perfectly polite, and as Ernest's friend, he is honoured and esteemed by us all; I should grieve at any interruption to our pleasant intercourse, and I am sorry you should seek to discover anything beyond. My mother must be the best judge of our intimacy, and I wish, Julia, you would not suggest such ideas; Hilary and I must be a good deal thrown together from circumstances, but you at least ought to understand our position, and if necessary, discourage all idle talk equally unjust to him as to me."

Mrs. Charles laughed a most provoking disbelief; she had long determined to speak her mind freely, whenever they might be alone together, and let them know what was her opinion of both the young men. The truth was she was vexed that Kate, whom she considered so much her inferior, should marry a person of higher rank than her own husband; also she had a vague idea that her overbearing temper was worse than useless when displayed to Arthur, for once not long ago, when he had presented Kate with a set of opals, the possession of which Julia greatly coveted, she had remarked with her usual habit of depreciating her sisters-in-law, that she was neither sufficiently dark nor fair to wear them advantageously, that they required a *prononcé* style to show off their varying beauty, and that it was always a mistake to give an unsuitable present, as it could never be worn with comfort; either the donor must feel aggrieved at his gift being slighted, or the wearer must do violence to her feelings, and display what she knew to be unbecoming, thus eventually rendering a source of annoyance what was originally meant to give pleasure. In the present case the costliness of the gift would enhance the discomfort to the possessor. She clasped the bracelets upon her own faultless arms while delivering the above oration, plainly indicating by her looks and manner to whom the *cadeau* had better be transferred.

Arthur had quietly noticed this little bit of acting, and merely observed that his taste and hers did not at all agree, for he had expressly chosen the opals, not only as being the gems he most admired, but also as becoming Kate in an unusual degree, he could not help hinting at the same time to the Polish belief, in the magic of those stones, that if placed in contact with envy,

they paled, and became of a dead leaden colour: Mrs. Charles had transferred them all from the case to her own person. There was an awkward pause, an appealing look from Kate to Arthur: he went on, "of course it is all owing to the reflection in which they are viewed;" and he placed some of the ornaments on his *fiancée*, drawing her to the light, and showed how peculiarly the shades blended.

"Naturally," said Julia, "they require light to show them off well."

"Exactly," he said, "light from within and without, a depth of light on all sides."

She had neither forgiven nor forgotten this little reproof, retaining an uncomfortable impression that he had defined the latent jealousy existing in her heart, and that he had meant she should know it.

Added to this he seemed by no means inclined to bow down before her haughty temper, nor to be struck by her beauty, and never complimented her upon her triumphs in society, her tact or *savoir faire*, and some such homage she exacted from all who came within her range, therefore she was quite ready to oppose anything with which his name was connected.

It was a great relief when the nurse entered to consult with her mistress about Fanny's cold, and they all adjourned to the nursery, where the girls became too much interested and amused with their little niece to dwell upon any disagreeables the visit had engendered.

CHAPTER III.

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

"I THINK it is as well Arthur should be coming to receive his own answer, mother; it is much more likely to be according to his desires than if conveyed through the post," said Ernest as they were sitting together.

"Have you and Kate been talking it over?"

"Yes, we held a council of war upon the subject in my sanctum, and he is quite right, I do not see what they are waiting for; he is well off; they are both old enough, and we all knew they were to be married when his term of mourning for old Sir John had expired. I cannot make out why Kate is holding back; are girls always the same, mother? they will and yet they won't. I can see she does not like to say yes, and I am sure she can give no reason for saying no."

"It is a serious thing, Ernest, to go forth to entirely new duties, leaving home and all its old associations to commence life under totally different auspices, a conscientious person would naturally be hesitatingly nervous about it, but I am sure no one will persuade her to leave us yet, if it requires such an effort to make up her mind."

"I will tell you where I think the difficulty lies, mother; it appears Arthur has a very great desire to pass the first six months of his married life abroad, and for some unknown fancy Kate seems to dislike the idea of travelling, which as I tell her is very perverse, as she has always expressed such an unbounded desire for it, and he being so enthusiastic about ruinous old Rome, would na-

turally like to take her there, and make her acquainted with all its crumbling beauties. Why, mother, last year we three, Kate, Mary, and I used to talk over all sorts of plans for going there, and we had even come to the resolution of coaxing my father to take us there for the winter, and supposing he could not remain away so long, to leave me in your charge, himself returning in the spring to fetch us. Kate was the most eager for it, so I do not see why she should object now; I hope the taking unto herself a husband is not going to make her capricious."

"That is not likely," said Mrs. Howard, "she is much too sensible, there may be some private reason in the background. But Arthur will scarcely insist upon his own pleasure; he will, we may be sure, allow her to decide where the wedding trip shall be passed; what bridegroom would be so ungallant as to settle their destination arbitrarily and leave the lady no choice?"

"Oh, we know he is always the first to give up to every one, but it is unlike Kate to be so changeable. Let me see, I suppose the wedding will take place in September or October, that is about three months hence, and they have been engaged six or nine, why it will be twelve months. I am sure I have heard you express your dislike to those long engagements, lasting for years; in this case it would literally be without reason."

"I do object to long unmeaning engagements very much, I have seldom seen them turn out happily; for instance, there is your Aunt Bayley, a case in point. She was betrothed for a very long time, and was past thirty when she married; both had outlived the freshness of their early feelings, and contracted habits of thought and action which it was difficult then to assimilate or alter; he was many years her senior, and when Oliver was born

I am sure his father—at least, whilst he was an infant—thought him a great bore: your aunt idolised her boy, making herself quite a slave to his childish whims and fancies. As time passed on, and there were no more children, he became thoroughly spoiled, or would have been but for your father's interference. Mr. Bayley died, you know, when his son was twelve years old, leaving him and his mother entirely to our care and protection, for it is since that event that the larger part of his property has devolved upon Oliver; he causes us much anxiety from his volatile character; he has abilities for almost any career, yet I fear, I very much fear he will fritter away time and talents and do nothing."

"Poor Oliver," mused Ernest, "he is always in disgrace, especially with my father; I hope, mother, for my sake, you will give him a helping hand whenever you can, for I am sure he possesses many right and good feelings, if one could only get at them."

"I much doubt the existence of excellence which never shows itself, and could not think of upholding him against the just anger his conduct provokes. I am surprised, Ernest, you should even hint at harshness in your father's measures, when you must be convinced of Oliver's many delinquencies."

"Indeed, mother, you are wrong, if you suppose I blame my father even in thought, only I cannot help loving Oliver; all I would presume to ask of you is to judge him as leniently as his many and great faults will permit."

Their conversation was interrupted by Kate's entering very hurriedly; she feared her mother had gone out, and wanted to tell her that Arthur would not arrive that day; he had a business appointment which could not be postponed, and unless he managed to finish his work very much

quicker than he had any hope of doing, his coming that evening was out of the question.

"Does he mention any train by which he hopes to come? if so, I will send the brougham on the chance of his arrival."

"Oh, no, mother dear; I do not think we need expect him until to-morrow."

"Then I daresay Ernest will walk with you both; I have promised to lunch with Julia, afterwards we are to drive to Highgate for the new maid's character, and this reminds me that it is growing late, so I shall go at once, for I must call on my way and take Fanny a toy, I daresay I shall be at home before five, but don't wait for me."

They then separated; each had ample employment for the day, and did not meet again until near dinner-time. Mrs. Howard was detained by her country drive, and therefore was only in time to take up the girls at the church-door: upon entering the house, they were surprised to see a carpet-bag and valise in the hall. Arthur met them on the stairs; he knew, after all, he should take them by surprise; he had concluded his business so much earlier than he had any reason to believe possible, and finding, upon reference to Bradshaw, that he should just have time to catch the train, he could not resist the temptation, notwithstanding his morning's letter.

Kate hoped his solicitor was satisfied with his despatch, as things done in a hurry were seldom well done; her eyes, however, beamed forth the welcome her tongue refused to second. Arthur exclaimed at the severity of her judgment, appealing to Mary, if in preferring duty to pleasure, when he anticipated being detained a day later, he had not earned a very high eulogium.

But the others had all quietly flitted to their

rooms, leaving the lovers to settle their argument as they thought fit. At dinner, Arthur asked if they had heard lately from Hilary? No. Ernest had written to him, but did not expect an answer until he had gained the fellowship he was working so hard to win.

"I am happy then in being the first to announce his success."

All were interested in the communication, Ernest flushing up excitedly, "Was it really so? Bravo! but he was certain of it?"

"Yes," said Arthur, in answer to a few words from Mr. Howard, "he is considered on all sides one of the shining lights of the University, with great natural talent cultivated to the highest degree, what eminence may he not attain?"

"True," said Mrs. Howard, "if he were a less staunch Churchman; you forget that places, dignities, and powers, are not for them; even the adverse party must allow their sincerity, as when once a man is a declared Anglo-Catholic, he is excluded from all share in such benefits."

"He must have worked very hard," said Mary; "I know it requires immense study to pass."

"I felt from the first he would succeed," said Ernest, "he is so clever."

"You naturally think so," broke in Kate; "but I doubt whether a fellowship implies great acquirements; most men get them, if they try; it is such a common thing to hear that so-and-so is a fellow of his college: that sort of learning may be of little real use in the world, particularly as Oxford studies consist only of dumb languages, as your dear friend Mrs. Merton asserts. Really, if people do nothing but sing Hilary's praises, he will become frightfully conceited, which in a priest would be a deadly sin; therefore I, for one, shall not swell the song of triumph chanted in his favour."

Now Kate, in this animadversion, was scarcely sincere, for in her heart, she believed him all that the others expressed; but, to use her own mischievous words, "the clergy should never be too highly praised," and therefore she availed herself of every opportunity to decry the University and its students.

"Well," said Arthur, laughing, "you can read him a warning lecture, and thus counteract all ill effects, as doubtless he will soon be in town."

"I will consider how the dose shall be administered," she answered; "and whenever so desirable an event takes place, I hope he will come *bien ganté*, for that's a point those high and mighty ones, our teachers, sadly neglect; did you notice Mr. Fordholme wore cotton gloves yesterday? I was quite ashamed to be seen walking with him down the street."

"Nonsense, Kate, you should not be so absurd, you know you would be as unwilling as any one to see a clergyman occupied about dress or spending money on it needlessly," said Mary. "Do you know, Arthur, some one was impertinent enough to present Mr. S. Magna with a pair of gloves through the medium of the Christmas tree."

"And," interposed Ernest, "any one but himself would have taken offence at such a liberty."

"My dear Ernest, I am sure it was a very delicate way of finding fault," Kate expostulated, "*bien chaussé* and *bien ganté* our clergy never are, therefore no *cadeau* could be more suitable, the best gentleman's kid at a cost of five or six shillings, a pity the much calumniated donor had not suspended a pair of boots on the corresponding branch."

"I always thought Oliver Bayley the culprit," said Ernest, "but a new light breaks in upon me; I fear, Kate, you also shared that misdemeanor."

She laughed merrily, observing, "even if they had been accomplices she should not tell tales."

"Ah!" said her father, from the bottom of the table, catching the sound of his nephew's name, "there seems little likelihood of hearing anything satisfactory of that young gentleman's studies; it would relieve me from much anxiety if I could presume he even attempted to set to work. But what are we all thinking of not to drink Hilary's health; there is no one I hold in higher estimation; I class him among the very few whose first thought is for his God, and the next for his neighbour."

"In so saying, father, I am sure you only do him common justice; he has no taint of self, and would sacrifice his most cherished wishes if their shadow only obstructed the plain path of duty he strives so hard to follow, consequently it is, I verily believe, marked out to him more clearly and distinctly than to those who have other yearnings than the one single aspiration of acting up to their profession, and doing all things to the glory of God."

"Bravo, my boy! I will say this, you have but few friends, but those few whether absent or present, could scarcely desire a more staunch supporter."

Hilary's health was drunk with all honour, by the genial warm-hearted merchant.

"I shall not fail to let him know your kind wishes, sir," said Arthur.

Hilary's successful career was cordially discussed by all the party, he being one of those gifted ones who invariably win their way. He was Ernest's friend par excellence; they had met in a secluded sea-side place, and fraternized immediately; the one was staying there to brace himself up after a course of over-study; the other was trying

change of air for his gradually-increasing ill-health. The acquaintance so formed grew and flourished; Hilary admired the honest straightforward character before him, so truthful in his lightest words, so perfectly free from assumption or affectation, whose affliction was a strong claim upon his kindly heart.

Ernest venerated the high resolves and humble piety so meekly put forth, striving to catch somewhat of the halo of sanctity which may be supposed to surround a newly-ordained priest. Indeed, if perfection were to be found upon earth, he firmly believed it could only exist in the person of Hilary S. Magna.

A loud double knock startled the party as they adjourned to the drawing-room, Ernest even rushing into the hall, as the thought suggested itself that his friend might have arrived thus suddenly to surprise them. Alas, for his expectations, he returned with Mrs. Bayley on his arm, evidently much gratified at his attention, as she entered the room commenting upon it.

"So polite of Ernest, you know, to come down and hand up his old aunt, as I always say to Oliver, he may not be so vivacious as most young men, but for respectful attention, commend me to him before you all."

She was by this time comfortably seated, and so immensely complimented at her nephew's supposed care, that each one thought it a pity to undeceive her, the good lady being wholly ignorant of the meaning smile on every face.

Sir Arthur inquired for her son, expressing a hope he played as much now as formerly, adding he had never come across so talented a musician.

"Yes," she said, "he is not likely to give it up; I do not think he could exist without some instrument near him; it does not much matter of what construction, music seems a necessity, without

which he would be lost ; what books are to most people, instrumental music is to Oliver, resting and refreshing his mind, soothing him in sorrow, a living voice cheering him on through all his wayward moods."

"I wish he were here to delight us with his wondrous gift to-night," said Kate ; "you were quite wrong just now, Arthur, in calling it talent, it is much more than that, I am sure we may pronounce it genius, notwithstanding that word is so usually misplaced."

Then followed a discussion between the two ; Arthur maintained that there was a distinction only and not a difference, Kate persisting that genius was an intellectual power, a gift of the first magnitude granted very seldom, enabling its possessor to master difficulties at once without trouble or study, achieving success by a sweep of the chords, or a dash of the pen. Talent she averred was a faculty many people possessed, the power of carefully weighing the capabilities of the mind, and reducing them to practice ; generally talent was associated with industry and energy, consequently a talented person would do more to assist mankind than a genius, for with the latter idleness and caprice were almost sure to be joined hand in hand. A real genius was hardly to be met with in a century, talented persons constantly ; and these latter ought to command our chief admiration for the greater benefits they confer upon mankind generally. Now Oliver was a genius, elevating and harmonising the powers of the mind by the exercise of his art, swaying the imagination at his will ; now with a thrilling pathos captivating the fancy, peopling the mind with all ideas good and holy ; now with a solemn grandeur and even by main force claiming the attention and admiration of all.

"Kate is quite right in her disquisition," said Mary, "for I remember last winter, we were sitting round the fire discussing the new engravings, when Oliver loitered up to the piano, and all unconsciously as it were, began playing what he chose to say, was the strain of the guardian spirit we were admiring, and certainly it sounded less of earth than any music I ever heard. You must remember, mother, how we sat heedless of time, so thoroughly enjoying the feast of sweet sounds, when after awhile, chancing to look that way, he saw Hilary listening in an attitude of rapt attention, as though his inmost being were drinking in the soft melody floating around, when at once he darted towards him one of his mischievous glances, and changed it into a harsh brawling drinking song. Poor Hilary started, and with a look of the most intense disgust left the room, whereupon Oliver ceased, delighted at his success. I was so provoked at his rudeness. But just so does he always act, ridiculing every good feeling and impulse."

"His persevering hostility to Hilary has frequently amused me," said Arthur; "apparently it is quite unprovoked."

"And," said Ernest, "Hilary takes it so good-temperedly that it only increases the evil, and urges him on to more covert attacks; I believe it is done out of pure opposition."

In the meantime, Mrs. Bayley had been holding a consultation with the elders over a letter she had received from her son; he was at Heidelberg, enjoying himself thoroughly at balls and *fêtes*, given in honour of a certain German Princess who had happened to linger there a few days in passing through. The students had for the greater part been invited, and his superior musical gift had, as usual, led to his being greatly in request, the said Princess having offered him almost fabulous sums,

to induce him to follow in her train; such as in sober earnest she could in nowise have redeemed, being like so many of her tribe, in exceeding poverty. His mother was considerably flattered at his success; it was natural, poor lady, that she should feel highly pleased that her son was so appreciated.

Mr. Howard openly expressed his disapprobation; instead of studying, Oliver was as usual frittering away his time like any butterfly; there were plenty of places of amusement at home, he need not have travelled so far for that. "From the first, you all know, I disliked this scheme of studying at a German University."

"Only, brother," pleaded Mrs. Bayley, "the advantages there are so superior for a musical education."

"All rubbish and stuff, I tell you, he will never be worth anything. It is all very well to assure us that he would so perfect himself as to become a great Composer; I know better, and said so at the time. Has not he tried all sorts of studies here, and failed? It has been the fashion to accord him a great reputation for talent, and pray what has he ever done to redeem it? I take great blame to myself for having given way, I ought to have negatived the idea when it was first started, I always disliked it; but, as usual, Oliver gained the day partly by impudence and partly by his voluble tongue. It will never do to let him change about from one place to another, as has been his wont. Since he obstinately chose to go, in spite of all advice, he must finish his term there, and on no account return without permission. To-morrow he shall learn from me that while he remains I expect him to work hard, and not exhibit himself like a showman, for the amusement of every travelling lackadaisical lady."

"My dear *father*," pleaded Ernest, "are we not

condemning him unheard? surely going to a few evening parties is not so very reprehensible?"

"I have read his letter, my boy, and you have not"—he had thrust it into his pocket, from whence it never re-appeared—"the whole tone of it is most objectionable, and should not have been addressed to his mother. Nevertheless," he added, relenting a little, "perhaps I am somewhat severe upon him, but he disappoints me so much, I had looked for such different results. Oliver has always been so very dear to us all," he said, turning apologetically to his sister, "that it vexes me the more to find him continually throwing away opportunities and advantages: he is really very tiresome and uncertain, no one can shadow forth what his ultimate path may be."

Although Ernest had been once disappointed that evening, there was some alleviation in a letter he received by the last post from Hilary, saying his visit to them must, however unwillingly, be postponed for the present, as there was a chance of his gaining at a distance some tidings of a private nature concerning his family. It was necessary, therefore, that he should start at once in a contrary direction, and try to discover if any satisfactory information, on a matter of importance to himself, could be obtained. Ernest might remember his having told him there was a person who had in charge for him a packet of solemn instructions, left for him by his dead father, for which he had been searching some time, he now hoped he had some faint clue to guide him. In the first instance, he was going to visit at Fontenelle Abbey, in which neighbourhood he understood there resided a relation of the person to whom the packet had been confided, and who seemed ever to elude him; he was at a loss to imagine why it should not have reached him years before, as it was purely of a

personal character, not relating to property in any way, and therefore to no one's interest to withhold it. When there, he would write, and let Ernest know his movements: if his search did not take him abroad, he would return and avail himself of Mrs. Howard's kind invitation, as the case might be.

CHAPTER IV.

HILARY S. MAGNA.

PACING up and down a broad-gravelled terrace were two young men, evidently clergymen by their dress, the one of a tall graceful figure, somewhat slight, but lithe and active, his noble head and spiritual cast of features giving him the stamp of considerable beauty; his complexion, hair, and eyes, were all dark, the latter often veiled in deep thought; but when an interesting subject was started, or his energy called forth, it was astonishing how piercing those eyes became, reading, as it were, the inmost thoughts of those he addressed. He might be about twenty-eight years old, but this moment was not a felicitous one to judge of his age, for the fine open forehead is painfully contracted, the long lashes rest upon the dark cheek, and his well-formed hands are tightly clasped across each other, as is his habit when greatly moved. His companion is some two or three years older, shorter, and less handsome in person, but a bright energetic looking man, no dreamer in his Master's vineyard, but one who would be always up and doing. Whatever he advocated was tangible, feasible; he never rested until his ideas were carried

out; no obstacle could check, no difficulties appal him; if a thing was right it must be done, and well done also.

Walter Wiltonthorpe was perhaps the best friend Hilary S. Magna could have chosen; their intimacy began and was cemented at their much-loved Oxford; they had strayed for hours up and down the water-walks of "Maudlin," holding high and holy converse in its solemn cloisters,—the charm of their student life was as yet unbroken, for although Hilary remained a fellow of his College, drinking deep draughts of the lore he so highly prized, Walter less studious, but more practical, had been some little time Curate in a large manufacturing district, yet by constant communication and frequent meetings, the interest in and for each other had never flagged. At the present time both were on a visit to Walter's elder brother, to whom belongs the lovely scene presented to their view each time they turn in their quick unfaltering walk.

The house is a large Elizabethan structure, with quaint gable-ends, and high ornamented chimneys; it is situated on the coast, in one of our south-western counties, where all vegetation flourishes so luxuriantly, the myrtle, syringa, and magnolia, climbing over the window projections, and peeping in at the small lobby door which opens on to this same terrace, and from which wide granite steps lead to another below, sloping gradually to the smooth velvet lawn, bounded by a semicircular belt of trees, whose roots are bathed in the waves of the bright blue sea. We have few places situated more beautifully than Fontenelle Abbey; true, it has not the charm of age, as its name might imply, for it was built by its late possessor, the present Lord Wiltonthorpe's father, an enriched younger son of an old family; it therefore has the advantage of all the newest inventions, both

architectural and domestic, some of the latter being so clever as entirely to defeat all useful purposes. The grounds, at the back of the house, are also laid out in terraces; but these are of smooth green turf, bordered with flower-beds, glowing in all colours of the rainbow, the luxuriant Bordeaux vines sweeping over them in elegant festoons. Beyond, the glades and winding walks deepen gradually into a little copsewood, behind which the ground rises, and on this elevation Walter hoped, before another summer came, to see the spire of a village church. It had been his constant endeavour to induce his brother to build a temple to the Most High, where he and his people might worship together; he was rich, and could well afford to do it. There was no church within three or four miles, and as all the neighbouring farms and cottages belonged to him it was clearly a duty.

Lady Wiltonthorpe always said it was folly to think of such a thing, for nearly all the poor were Dissenters, and had plenty of meeting houses in every direction, which it was not probable they would forsake for the Church Services, conducted as Walter desired. Walter said it was the more shame to his own family who had taught their people no better: one thing was clear, if there was no church the poor could not come to it; but if one were provided, and still they resisted, the sin must then rest on their own heads. He had been labouring at this project for the last eight years; he never wrote to Fontenelle without some allusion to it; he never paid them a visit without urging it strenuously, and now he had come home for his summer holiday to re-commence the attack more vigorously than ever. But we will return to the friends, as it is with their conversation we have most to do.

"This is most complicated. Hilary, since when has it assumed a tangible form?"

"I think the first feeling of insecurity I experienced—the first startling thrill that I was walking blindfold—the first painful twinge of what my duty might exact—arose last Easter, when I was staying with the Howards; we had all been to early Communion, at the Church of the Holy Angels, but it was at a later service the arrow shot home. The preacher, in his morning sermon, touched upon Missionary life. Why did his few words then and there raise the first faint glimmer in my mind that I should do well to consider this? And since then I have pondered silently, and prayed God to direct me, all, all without finding peace. And yet his words were no more than I have listened to many times before without a shadow of discomfort. He began by saying Easter was our great Festival, the Queen of Feasts! At Christmas, however much we might rejoice, the feeling that the same Holy Child born unto us on that day is also on Good Friday to be crucified, must somewhat damp our joy. But at Easter all was exultation and hope, His glorious Resurrection was an earnest that our mortal bodies should also put on immortality; it was a time when all men, even the poor penitent, who often dared not lift up so much as his eyes to Heaven, might join the universal Alleluia, that word caught from above, the full meaning of which we so imperfectly comprehend. He then touched lightly but earnestly upon the misery of the poor heathen, who are ignorant of this our Great Redeemer; how we should show our appreciation of the blessings we enjoy, by following out the latest wish of our SAVIOUR. Of course I am only giving you my remembrance in a few disjointed words; he said the last wishes of departed friends were invested

with peculiar sacredness in the eye of affection, and this, therefore, the latest expressed one of our Blessed LORD, was especially urgent upon us His loving followers; that there was the more need of godly and Christian example now among the heathen, to repair as best we might the injury already done to the true Faith, for the civilization of savage nations had frequently brought destruction of body and soul to the aborigines. We, who were intrusted with the gifts of Truth and Power, might not be misers of our rich store, but ought to contribute alms, prayers, and above all, holy men for the work, for so only should our great commercial wealth prove our great blessing. Every one present must have felt the force of words uttered with all the energy of deep feeling; at least, I know the appeal made me consider very closely my own course of life, whether I individually was helping to carry out this last wish of our Blessed LORD; or whether I was not indulging my own inclination by lingering at Alma Mater, pursuing studies so exactly in accordance with my taste. Well, time passed on, and the spark lay slumbering, when I happened one day to have a long interview with Dr. Maddox, the Master of our College, who spoke of a certain Colonial Bishop, his great friend, who, in a letter to him, lamented the extreme dearth of clever, learned men in his Diocese. It was no use to send out those who, *faute de mieux*, were willing to try the Colonies; who, despairing of any share of what was to be had at home, came seeking their chance of preferment abroad. He must have men whose hearts were in their work, who were willing and anxious to give up all they most cherished—like the Apostles of old—to follow their Great Master. All this, and much more, like a leaven stirring within me, brought forth from its hidden recess the undefined feeling about reparation for

the neglect of my parents, which, from my early childhood, has lain lurking in my breast. I know that my father was a most unhappy man, that he left me the inheritance of the burden he found so heavy to bear: this I may not cast off. It is difficult to put into words my exact meaning; but he intended I should in some sort atone for his shortcomings. This idea I had as a child; how it came so planted in a young mind, I cannot say; but it had died out, was, in fact, totally effaced before ever I knew Mary Howard, who has been the centre around which all my earthly hopes have revolved ever since Ernest and myself were thrown together. My introduction to his family took place, as you know; and from the moment I first saw her, her goodness, gentleness, and many virtues, inspired me with the highest admiration, which soon deepened into a warmer feeling; she is, in truth, worthy of all love; and while associating with that family, I was insensibly sinking into a dream of happiness and ease, forgetting the warfare before me. I was suddenly aroused from my pleasant slumber to attend the deathbed of the old Dean, my guardian. He told me in an absent, rambling sort of way—so that I could hardly make out what was reality, and what the confused wandering of the brain—that there is somewhere, in some one's keeping, a packet, containing my father's written instructions for my rule of life, which he seemed to think implied my becoming a Missionary. Practical men, with whom I have been compelled to discuss this, say, that as I was not born at his death, I need not be held bound by it; but Walter, it seems to me, that obedience to his wishes, whatever they might be, is the only course left for a son, placed as I am. So bewildering was all the old man related, I might have thought he was talking of some dream, only

that a few chance words of his touched the responsive chord of memory I have alluded to, and the long-forgotten childish idea started again into existence.

"Now I think you are acquainted with my difficulty, my affection for that fair girl, in whose pure heart I might perhaps in time have raised an interest; do not think me vain enough to suppose that she is in love with me, only in time I might have stood a chance, but this I dare not urge in the face of what has given me so much trouble to explain. Involved in such a dilemma, how am I to decide which is the nearest duty?"

Walter walked to the end of the terrace in silence, the lines around his mouth growing more stern with every quickening step, at length,

"From my heart I pity you," broke from his lips. "Hilary, this is a state of things which should be an impossibility to such as you and I, and day by day as events occur, I am more thoroughly convinced of the wisdom of advocating the voluntary celibacy of many of our clergy; mind, I say voluntary, and had such a doctrine been upheld, you would have subscribed to it years ago; many an one who will not entertain the idea now, will ere many years have passed, acknowledge the expediency and wisdom of it. My friend, if you had had the same feeling as myself upon this subject, how much of mental misery you would have escaped. However, I will be merciful for the nonce, and leave that old argument of ours, for when we used to discuss it, I believe you always thought it a contingency most unlikely to arise in your own person. It is an event in my life, old fellow, to triumph over you, so forgive the vain-glorious indulgence in consideration of its rarity."

A slight smile gleamed over Hilary's face, but in a moment it was gone, leaving him sadly silent

as he paced by his friend's side with an expression of meek humility, for he felt it was all true? How could he possibly be so intricately placed without feeling that there was blame attached to him?

"So," said Walter, "you allowed your growing admiration for Miss Howard to appear evident, believing yourself then a free agent; since then you have discovered you were not so, and that your path in life had been marked out for you, by one who undoubtedly had the power so to act, thus two duties clash, one equally weighty with the other."

Again there was silence between them, this time lasting longer, for both were in deep thought. Walter spoke abruptly at last,

"Your first move must be to hunt out this packet."

"Easier said than done; I have no clue."

"There must have been some among the old dean's papers."

"I have written to his executors, who tell me, many old discoloured letters were burned by his son, on looking through his cabinet. They feared if there were any relating to my affairs, they have shared this fate; so you see I am foiled at the outset. These conflicting feelings have worn me almost into a nervous fever, and the hope that your strong practical sense would pierce the thick darkness by which I am surrounded was a strong inducement to meet you here."

Walter scanned his fine features earnestly, the twitching of the nether lip, the convulsive clasp of the hands, all spoke of a fierce conflict. And of what nature was his silent query. Entangled affections and a supposed duty! He could but recommend the one panacea for all trouble—patient, earnest, unflagging prayer.

"I have tried hard," said Hilary, "to subdue

the restless spirit within me, and to feel that in His own good time our God will show me my work, and give me strength to do it. Some such supplication I offer up daily; Walter, let your petitions be added to mine, that my deep love may not warp my judgment;" and he wrung his friend's hands in an agony of mental suffering.

"I can offer neither counsel nor advice now," said Walter, "the case is too complicated, I must have time to think, I must be alone to judge. At first sight it might seem that you are bound to lay the case before Miss Howard, to tell her of your own unswerving undiminished love, explaining your ignorance that there existed any obstacle to the indulgence of your feeling at the time you were paying her those attentions, and that your hopes were then concentrated upon winning her affections, until your interview with the dying dean, placed you in your present difficult position. After that she must decide, if as becomes a dutiful daughter of the Church she be willing to give up her first and best affections at the call of her God, then you are free, but if she hesitate even in the slightest degree, there is no doubt, you must fulfil the implied engagement, and in some country rectory God will give you equal means of serving Him. But do not take this as my ultimate decision, we shall have ample opportunities of viewing the case in all its bearings, even now other points suggest themselves."

A servant approached at that moment to summon them to breakfast, so after a few quick turns to recover from the agitated feelings roused by the subject they had been discussing, the two friends sought the dining-room. It was on the other side of the house, and so large that it looked from the exterior like a private chapel; on entering, it was seen to be no more than a handsome

room, beautifully decorated ; in each carved oak panel was a full length portrait of some distinguished member of the family, cabinet ministers, warriors, sailors, quiet country gentlemen and stately dames, all found a representative, not forgetting the famous bay horse who figured so conspicuously at Waterloo, and whose descendant has the honour of bearing the present Lady Wiltonthorpe. She had been a court beauty, and was still a very handsome woman between thirty and forty, and like all who have been fêted in youth, unwilling to give up the universal admiration she once commanded.

How few have the grace to renounce the fascinations of their sex, when middle age is creeping on, and the follies of youth should be repented of: happy they who have no worse than its follies to haunt their meditations.

The party greeted each other cordially.

"You are certainly both early Christians," said Lady Wiltonthorpe, "for there is no knowing how many hours you have been out; I saw you from my dressing-room window, and by your looks, I knew Walter was building the church."

"By the way," he answered, "as yet we have said nothing about it," and turning to his brother,

"Have you written for estimates?"

"First I must decide whether any will be required. Now, Mr. S. Magna, do you uphold him in this quixotic notion? He never gives me any rest; I dare say you have heard my objections which Walter overthrows like so many paper windmills."

Hilary said he was afraid he must give his vote against his host; he was familiar with both sides of the question; their conversations in olden days at dear old Oxford had often been on that subject; he thought it was a clear duty under the circumstances.

Lord Wiltonthorpe with a blank look went on with his breakfast for some time in silence, at length the post bag was brought in, which he eagerly seized, duly distributing the letters.

"What delicate caligraphy," said Lady Wiltonthorpe, as she passed one to Hilary, laughingly asking if it could "a tale unfold."

He blushed like a girl, and opened it, she watching him the while with an amused expression, thinking how transparent were the feelings of this new school of churchmen. In times past she herself had been deemed so good an actress that some might have thought possibly the power to feel was wanting.

"Bad news?" inquired Walter, as his friend's large eyes were raised with a melancholy expression.

"No, only poor Ernest is sadly disappointed at my non-appearance."

He turned to his neighbour to explain that it was young Howard of whom he spoke, and who was very dear to him; they had met originally when both were ruralizing; he had been irresistibly attracted with a feeling of almost womanly love to the delicate lad who was so much younger than himself, and who alluded so touchingly to the fatal disease which he felt must lay him in an early grave, but which had no terror for him, the chief regret being for the dear ones he must leave behind.

Lady Wiltonthorpe's interest was excited. She said she regretted not having the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with Mrs. Howard; she had heard much of her from a mutual friend Lady Dalton; they were old schoolfellows, and Caroline always spoke in raptures of the sweet gentle Margaret Leslie, who since her marriage had withdrawn so completely from society. Were her

daughters equally superior? Her curiosity had been excited by his heightened colour, and she was trying dexterously to discover whence it arose.

"The Miss Howards," he said, "are all one should expect from such a mother; of the youngest, Mary, perhaps you could judge, if you had any faith in graphiology," handing her the envelope. "She has directed her brother's letter; he has written to scold me for coming here instead of visiting them as promised. Kate, the eldest, is engaged to Sir Arthur Musgrave, probably you know him."

"Yes," said Lady Wiltonthorpe, "I met him in London, he did not go out much last year. I believe he was embroiled with his uncle about some land which once belonged to the Church; such sanctified nonsense, dividing a good old property, his heirs will little thank him for such whims. However," she continued, "I believe the old baronet, with all his eccentricities, had too much common sense to part with any of his acres, and Arthur will be grateful for it when his enthusiastic fit has blown over."

Hilary's low solemn "God forbid," seemed rather to annoy his fair companion, who said, "Of course you would approve of that sort of thing, but really the story as I heard it, argued little for Sir Arthur's judgment."

"More than half the misconceptions and discords of life arise from misrepresentation," said Hilary, "therefore as I am in possession of the real facts, will you listen to my version of the affair?"

Lady Wiltonthorpe liked to hear his richly modulated voice, and to mark the changing expression of his handsome features, and just then having nothing else to amuse her, she graciously signified her attention, on condition that they ad-

journed to the lawn under the shade of the large beeches.

"The Musgraves are a Cheshire family, upon whom a curse has plainly rested, as will be the case where sacrilege has been committed without repentance or restitution."

She interrupted him.

"Do you mean to say repentance must always be followed by restitution?"

"Most assuredly to be acceptable; they are happy who have it in their power to give this proof of their sincerity, but inasmuch as oftentimes the injury inflicted cannot be repaired, the penitent must then experience all the greater remorse."

"But in this case," she said, "it hardly seems right for Sir Arthur to lop off any of the inheritance from his successors."

"Do you suppose it seemed right to alienate that property from S. Mary's Abbey?"

"Oh," she said, "that is so long ago, one cannot sympathise with those so far back, besides taking from a community seems less of a theft than from an individual."

Hilary could not help smiling, observing her ideas of honesty were most original.

"If you have not read Spelman, may I request you to do so; he will explain the true principle involved in this matter far more effectually than I can."

"Speiltenham," she repeated, wilfully misunderstanding and miscalling the name. "Is it a German author you are recommending, because my acquaintance with that language is by no means so great as to enable me to read it with facility; besides, I am not sure that I like German reasoning."

"Neither do I, nor should I ever recommend it.

Spelman is, I assure you, an Englishman, and honestly in earnest; you will find the work in Walter's book-shelves. But to resume. Sir Godfrey, who was the head of the house in the middle of the last century, was notoriously a grasping miser. Adjoining one part of his domain, and indeed, seemingly a portion of it, was a farm of perhaps eighty or one hundred acres, perfectly insignificant in size as compared with the surrounding estate, but so far valuable, that it was the most productive land in all England, every thing on it flourishing threefold. This desirable farm belonged to S. Mary's Abbey at York; possibly it had been bequeathed by some miserable sinner in those dark days when men thought to atone for a life of violence by bribery to the Church upon the bed of death."

She glanced rather mischievously at him from beneath her fine eyelashes, demurely expressing her belief, that unless she were mistaken, there existed some such legend. He went on without appearing to notice the interruption.

"At all events it was reported and fully believed by the country people, that whosoever attempted to detach it from the Abbey lands would never prosper. I need not say S. Mary's has long been a ruin, and all its funds scattered to the winds; but odd enough, there is a little old church in York still dedicated to 'Our Lady,' and to its rector, whose income is barely eighty pounds per annum, the proceeds of this farm should belong. However, in the last century, the interests of the Church were little cared for by her clergy, so by dint of fees, bribery, and some blustering, Sir Godfrey succeeded in making this purchase, and adding it to his estate, foolishly elated at having surmounted all obstacles, and achieved his object. How true it is, that spoliation of sacred property

must be sooner or later the destruction of profane hopes; for ere the night had closed upon the day of sale his heir was lying a corpse upon the green-sward of those very meadows, struck by a thunder-bolt in what seemed an insignificant summer storm. I need not go into all details from that time to this, but I know the heirs of the family have always come to an untimely end; and when in this generation only Arthur remained, who as the youngest son of the fifth brother appeared so little likely to become the heir, he sought an interview with his uncle, and told him he would have nothing to do with the succession unless due restitution were made to S. Mary's. Old Sir John stamped and swore, and a conversation ensued as disgraceful to the old man as it was creditable to his nephew. Arthur remained firm, telling him that sooner than countenance such sacrilege, he would emigrate to Canada, relinquish all claim to the title and estates, and work out his own way in life. Sir John exultingly reminded him of the strict entail, which would enforce his succession, whether he liked it or not: our friend knew this but too well; had it been otherwise, he would have rested quietly until he came into possession, when he would have restored the land to the Church, as it was the signature of the possessor and heir-at-law was indispensable. However, if we seek to do right in a humble spirit of obedience, God will help us.

"There was one whom Sir John had greatly wronged in earlier life; accident enabled Arthur to befriend her, eventually he pressed her claims upon his uncle, which were all the greater in his eyes for her retiring silence, and induced him to settle an annuity upon her. The old man pretended to call him a fool for his pains, but shortly afterwards the family solicitor, in a formal note

requested Mr. Musgrave's presence at his office, naming a certain time, as his signature was required to a document by which his client intended the restoration of a certain farm on his estates to the living of S. Mary at York. You may be sure Arthur kept the appointment with a light heart; both shook hands when the business was effected, and remained great allies. Last year, as you know, when Sir John was taken suddenly ill, Arthur was sent for, but arrived too late to see his uncle alive."

Lady Wiltonthorpe declared she had always delighted in him, and now she should do so more than ever. Naturally the opinion one conceived of any matter depended on the way in which it was related; Mr. S. Magna's version had totally altered her pre-conceived idea of the transaction; "but," she continued, "you really alarm me by your strong conviction on this subject, as our poor home," looking around with evident pride, "happens to be called an Abbey; I fear Walter, with you to back him, will some day insist upon its being Church property, and compel us to render it up to the nearest Bishop."

"If it had been sacrilegiously obtained," he answered, "my friend would doubtless act up to his principles; but it seems certain Fontenelle Abbey was thus designated merely to suit the architect's fancy; originally, there is no doubt, from the geological formation around, this was all a dense forest, the greater part of which has been engulfed by the sea encroaching upon these shores, as it is known to have receded from the eastern coast."

"Yes," she said, "there are distinct traces of the roots of trees imbedded in the sand plainly visible when the tide is out; but allowing this, we may suppose Fontenelle will be swallowed up within a certain number of years, so either way we must be victims. I can only hope such may

not be the case during our generation. But do look at Walter, stalking towards us over flowerbeds and fences, as if he were shod with the seven-league boots: what can it be?"

"I want you both," he said coming up breathlessly; "I have been searching for you everywhere. Henry has consented to examine the site for the church, he wishes us all to go together."

Lady Wiltonthorpe declared his impetuosity overpowered her, men now-a-days went at things in such a railroad style; toiling up a hill in that hot season was out of the question; besides, it required great consideration before any decision could be come to. Looking out the site was in point of fact agreeing to the whole thing, which, to say the least of it, was premature; there certainly was no hurry.

It would appear not from her indolent, measured way of speaking, lounging on the garden seat as if there were nothing of more importance to be done in life.

Walter pleaded very hard; her husband was to meet them at the little copse gate, later he must see the bailiff, and therefore could not be kept waiting; she should have as little fatigue as possible; his own arm and Hilary's were quite at her service; they would accommodate their pace to hers.

The two presented a great contrast; she speaking and acting as though time were eternity, moving in her usual indifferent manner; he all energy and life, his bright eye and flushed cheek showing how near the subject was to his heart. After a while she languidly supposed they must go, first sending Walter for her garden gloves with gauntlets, then begging Hilary to substitute a sunshade for her parasol, he would find it somewhere in the lobby; till with the exercise of some trou-

ble and more patience they joined Lord Wiltonthorpe.

Years ago it had been allowed in the neighbourhood that Walter Wiltonthorpe was a person of great taste; and certainly if the spot to which he now guided them were to serve as a proof, none could gainsay the universal opinion. As they leisurely ascended what scarcely deserved the name of hill, the elevation was so slight, he desisted upon the advantage of a twenty minutes' walk to church; it gave time to dispel all worldly thoughts, and concentrate them upon God. He had read of a good man of old, who always rested with his hand upon the door before entering a place of worship, in order to realize the Presence into which he was entering; we should do well to copy him.

There were many cows grazing in the field through which they were passing, Lady Wiltonthorpe wished to know when the footpath was made whether they contemplated stiles?

"Yes," said her husband, "one here, as this will probably be the boundary of the churchyard."

"Then that settles the walk as far as I am personally concerned; for climbing over them, or passing through those which swing backwards and forwards are equally impossibilities to me."

Lord Wiltonthorpe described a different sort he had seen at Maurisgrove Park; it answered every purpose, and did not interfere with crinoline; he would sketch it for her; it effectually prevented the egress of both cows and sheep, and was in its way perfect. She voted all stiles abominations, and did not believe there could be one which might be decently got through or over. Her husband then endeavoured to explain his idea more fully, and leaving them to settle the point, Walter hurried Hilary forward to reconnoitre. Both stood silent: it was indeed a lovely view,

just the spot one should have pictured whereon to place God's house. Far out to the east stretched a fair woodland scene of hill and dale, interspersed with country seats; here a rural homestead, the haystacks, pigeon-house, and barns distinctly seen; a group of elms gave relief to the eye, beyond which rose the square tower of a village church, and like a thread of silver glittering in the sun, the broad stream gradually wound its way down to the beach, losing itself among the sands and rocks. Bearing to the south, the lovely little bay sparkled and danced, dotted all over with picturesque small craft, one or two yachts, some pleasure boats, oyster dredgers, and others more suspicious looking; in fact the coast all around was so broken by rock and cave, that it would have been odd indeed if a little smuggling had not existed even in these respectable days. Carrying the eye further on, the clear blue water gradually widened into the Channel, jagged points and cliffs stretching their rugged outline even to the beautiful west. A magnificent old oak, the growth of ages, seemed placed there purposely to screen the east window, and a lane of linden trees to the south would form a walk to the porch door. All around was space sufficient for "God's Acre," as the fine old Saxon word expresses it. As they stood and conjured up the whole, it was pleasant to feel how conspicuous the spot was; that the spire of their little church would be a landmark far out at sea; some piously disposed minds would perhaps bless those who had placed it there, the last object for them to dwell upon ere they lost sight of the shore, or the first for those returning from a long voyage, suggesting where to render thanks for their safe return.

Hilary expressed his unqualified admiration of the spot, but they must study the poor; would this be out of the way for them?

"By no means," Walter hastened to assure him, "that road which looked more like the bed of a dried-up brook, so full was it of ruts and stones, led to Dettleton, the pathway by the windmill was direct from Tesheep, both those villages were about two miles distant, and Hilary could judge for himself with regard to the people upon the estate. The footpath from the house would be very nearly as they had come; the carriage road must sweep further round by the last lodge, and through that group of firs, and so turn by some well-directed curve into the broad drive." Lord Wiltonthorpe pooh-poohed this last contemptuously; that would not do at all; he rather flattered himself he excelled in forming roads. Walter might stick to the ecclesiastical part, and this should be his care. Lady Wiltonthorpe begged to be informed if all the windows were to be of stained glass, because, if so, perhaps Walter would provide suitable spectacles; how people read their prayers in a church, which at mid-day was deep gloom, she knew not, it was a feat beyond her. Walter looked just a little annoyed, but undertook to answer for the light; and also suitable kneeling accommodation she hoped, as a friend of hers had hardly been able to walk these six months past, from kneeling in the winter in one of the extremely orthodox churches, upon the bare stone; it really was dangerous and should be looked to.

Hilary suggested that all those minor points could be studied later; the first thought was the building itself.

She agreed, and as that required consideration, and they had now done all that could be arranged at present, she and her husband would wend their way to the home farm, where their presence was needed.

The two friends strolled off in an opposite direc-

tion; Walter expressing his thankfulness for that day's proceedings. None knew the earnest unwearying prayers he had poured forth daily for such a consummation; indeed to none other could he speak of his heart's inmost desires. "From a boy this has been the cherished wish of my soul; you know our parents have long been dead; my brother was early his own master, a dangerous thing for a high-spirited boy, although, blessed be God, he passed an eldest son's ordeal with wealth and title better than nine-tenths of the young men placed in a similar position. He was always loving and generous to me, so that I have never felt those discomforts peculiar to a younger son which one hears so piteously described by most of my class. Years ago we used to talk over the church we would raise to our God. But Henry went abroad, and after that married, so it has been deferred. If he had had a large family, who can say? perhaps it would have been left for another generation; as it is, you know my great happiness to-day;" for he added, humbly, "who are we, to be allowed to build a temple to the Most High, when even David, the man after God's own heart, was not permitted to do so!"

"You ever cheer me, as of old," said Hilary, "while conversing with you, I feel as if my path will eventually be plain and clear, notwithstanding the present impenetrable mist."

"If," said Walter, "in all our anxieties we only put our whole trust and confidence in Him, Who has a more tender care for us than we have for ourselves, it would be so different; few of us understand real prayer; many never pray at all; many only when something is to be obtained, a slavish service rendered for the necessity of our requirements; fewer still make an act of prayer as he you have alluded to, beginning by a fervent

thanksgiving for all the nameless blessings one cannot enumerate."

"True," observed his friend; "we of the present day are still far inferior to the early Christians; their whole lives were one act of adoration. Our Blessed LORD Himself went three times to His FATHER on the same errand with the same words in a few hours' time. More frequent services and communions would be a real return to the usages of the primitive Church, with us, as with them, the end aimed at is the same, and the same human nature requires the same helps; in the present day, thanks be to God, we have many opportunities, and therefore our sin is the greater if we neglect them, and we need all our strength at times to dispel the dark clouds that overshadow us. Such was the fierce controversy we are not likely soon to forget, on the Holy Eucharist, when many even of the clergy were stirred up to a spirit of bitterness, so hindering the onward progress of the Church: for you and I her priests, it is sometimes well to look these truths in the face, to dwell upon and give them utterance."

Discoursing thus, laying bare their feelings each to the other as had been their wont at college; they came upon a cottage, the porch covered with wild clematis, which flourishes so luxuriantly in those parts, in a quiet shady lane with only two or three other tenements. Walter invited Hilary to enter, saying it was the abode of their old nurse, Susan Ransom, a tall gaunt woman, with every joint twisted and enlarged by the most painful attacks of rheumatic gout. She had no relations of her own, and had concentrated all her warm affections upon her two "dear boys." Unlike most of her class, she was exceedingly well off, for, in addition to her own savings, her income had often been increased by bequests from her family,

therefore, instead of wanting assistance, which would have been cheerfully rendered, she had enough and to spare. Her welcome was exuberantly joyous, and as Walter sat down by her large arm chair, drawn into the sunniest angle of the window, she caressingly stroked his hand, evidently contrasting with pride its fair white proportions with her own so crooked and discoloured.

"I hope, Susan, you have suffered less this bright hot summer, and that you are feeling as well as you look."

"Thanks be to God I am so well, dear, and able to sit up and enjoy the fine weather, but asking your pardon, is this Mr. S. Magna, I heard tell he was at the Abbey, and was thinking, mayhap, afore long you would both be down this way."

Hilary acknowledged his identity, saying, "they could but meet as old friends from having heard so much of each other, when Walter had a cold he invariably wished for Susan and one of her nice warm possets; no one else could make one to his satisfaction." The old woman's eye glistened: she certainly liked to be thought necessary to their comfort.

"Are you making a long stay in these parts, sir?" she asked.

"Not very long I fear; one might grow idle in this lovely place; however, I shall certainly make time to come and see you again."

"Thank you kindly; you make me proud and happy; you see I get lonely sometimes, although the children, when my lady's school is out, always come down the lane, and some of them says a bit of poetry, and some bring their knitting to look at, and now and then when they are at a stand still in their catechism they come to old Susan for help; you see, sir, mothers and fathers have so much to worry them like; they have not all got

patience with the young things. And then I have always a few sweets or a bit of cake for the best; it's natural they should look for it; I don't hold with giving money at no time, it is not good for rich or poor, only encouraging covetousness, I've seen the evil of it many times."

Hilary quite agreed with her, being glad she had so many pleasant ways of passing her time, which he feared must hang heavy occasionally, from her great affliction.

"Oh, sir," she said, "think of the books Mr. Walter here sends me, and now and again one of those beautiful sacred prints, that one over the fire-place, 'Jacob's Dream,' is my favourite, the angels' faces are so beautiful."

Walter declared he was quite jealous; Susan took more notice of Hilary than of him, he was not going to be thrust out of his place of chief favourite, besides, he had come to impart a rare piece of news. What did she think they had been doing that morning? She did not know; perhaps to see the new churns at the show farm. "No," guess again. "To look at the large Durham bull which came down by rail?" wrong still. "What should you say, Susan, to choosing a site for the church?"

"The LORD's Name be praised," burst exultingly from the poor withered lips! "Often I have thought of how you and my young lord used to make drawings and lay plans and talk of how beautiful it should be, but I've dropped speaking of it long ago, seeing how sorely it vexed you, dear, that it was never begun; and somehow my lord always recollected something to do, or some order to give when I asked him about it. Here, take this key and open that bureau, I can't move myself without a world of trouble;" it was one of those old-fashioned pieces of furniture with drawers

and a slanting desk above; "now pull out rests and let down the lid," she continued, not quite excited, as her instructions were willingly complied with; "put your hand into that little pigeon-hole: no, not that, the next; at the bottom you will find a packet; ay, that's it;" as Walter drew it forth, astonished at her fluttering manner. She proceeded to unfold the dusty discoloured paper nervously, so that her stiffened fingers could hardly perform her will; at length she produced five bank notes, smoothing out each one singly on her lap, with tears on her face she handed them in his hands saying, "Awhile ago, I sold these away, in hopes when the church should be built I might be allowed to give, of what I had seen so bountifully bestowed upon me; latterly I have thought I might be at rest before it was done, and so I had it put down in my will where it was to be found, and that they should be given to you, Master Walter, and if it is not too much to ask, may they buy a font? You need say anything about it to any one, and may spend them as you like, some way for the church; if I may choose, I'd rather it was a font, I suppose, did not these old arms carry there both mine and my lord; well do I remember both your father's arms, and your beautiful mamma standing by, smiling like an angel, as she is now. But remember me and you too, Mr. S. Magna, it's to be just as you see fit."

There was a solemn silence in that small cottage, each heart was deep in prayer that the blessed offering of a loving heart might be accepted.

At length Hilary raised his hands and voice in singing, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," and they gently left the room.

CHAPTER V.

FONTENELLE ABBEY.

THERE was to be a large dinner-party that night at Fontenelle, one of those country-house gatherings which so many, tired out with the season, and disappointed in their worldly hopes and projects, always consider an unmitigated bore; and which others who live all the year round at home, and whose gaieties are so much less, look forward to as one of their chief occasions of pleasure. Yes, truly, like the knights gazing at the shield of old, all things look different when seen from various points.

Lady Wiltonthorpe was dressed early, Walter was with her in the conservatory gathering its bright treasures under her direction, to form a bouquet for the front of her dress, discoursing the while upon all sorts of things; he had seldom felt so happy, so entirely free from worrying cares, and all the littlenesses of human nature, which a curate in a large manufacturing district is sure to have brought before him. From the ruffled look of his companion's fair face, it was evident she did not participate in his serenity. Once he was rather surprised at a sharp request to gather from the back, and not spoil the effect of the plants, just as it was all lighted up for company; however, being unfortunately near-sighted, he failed to remark the brewing storm, talking of the expected guests, now altering the placing of the pots, anon twisting away a too conspicuous branch, observing after a while he thought her bouquet would be much more becoming than any ornament of more intrinsic value. She answered shortly it was of little consequence

if it was her will to substitute flowers for gems. Still he took no notice; he was not usually so unobservant, but as has been said, he bore about him that evening such a well-spring of happiness, it required more than an ordinary check to disturb his equanimity. It came soon enough; he had just cut the last sprig required, and was handing it to her, admiring its wax-like perfections, when struck by a sudden thought he expressed a wish she would send a box of those fragrant blossoms to Ernest Howard in London, they would be so acceptable, "And one is always glad to add to the pleasures of those passing away; for alas! Hilary fears he may at any moment hear of his death. I will give the necessary orders to Bramot, shall I? Also, he had better remove this creeper, it is overpoweringly faint, particularly at night; I'll tell him to do so."

At this the storm burst.

"I thank you, Walter; when orders are necessary about my own conservatory, I will give them myself. Surely, having worked your will to-day upon all important points might satisfy the most craving ambition; I have no desire to be completely priest-ridden in my own home!"

For one moment Walter stood transfixed at this outburst, with a face of blank amazement, the next he was at her side, his hand upon her arm.

"You must listen," he said, as she made a movement towards the drawing-room; he could hardly frame his words to express how completely this petulance had surprised him: "it seems impossible you should have so misunderstood my motives. As to the occurrence of this moment, I was wrong in proposing to command your servants, although it would have been done in your name; I beg pardon for my inadvertence."

Her head began now to droop, and the poor

flower in her hand fell in gradual showers upon the white pavement, its rainbow petals scattered here and there on the elegant folds of her dress.

"From the other more serious accusation, how shall I defend myself in a few seconds, when hours would hardly be long enough to place before you all the springs of action involved therein; only believe this, if I have seemingly outstepped a younger brother's position in this house, if I have violently urged you and your husband to this great thing, it is in order that the names of the brother and sister I so much love should be pre-eminent in it. True, I could have waited until the next Lord Wiltonthorpe succeeded; but it will gratify me far more to be a subordinate, yourselves being the principals, in erecting this holy building: promise me an audience to-morrow in your boudoir, and until then recall the harsh accusation which has so pained me. Now I hear carriage wheels." He held open the glass door, she bowed haughtily in passing, and the next moment was receiving her friends with all her accustomed grace of manner.

Poor Walter hastened to his room, only reappearing in time to follow in the train of goodly company filing into the dining-room. Whatever had been his remedy for banishing all trace of such undeserved annoyance, it was very successful, for he went through the ordeal of dinner with his usual calm deportment.

Later in the evening, Hilary was particularly attracted by the mild, benevolent features of an old lady: it was evident by the expression in her face, that she had seen great sorrow; and equally so by her clear blue eye, and the remarkable repose of her mouth, that she had fought the battle, not in her own strength, and been a victor. He noted her silvery hair, the black dress edged with the finest lace, the grey shawl cast loosely about her,

and thinking she was the most perfect picture of venerable age he had ever met, he slid quietly in the vacant seat by her side, his interest greatly excited: to his surprise she accosted him at once, almost eagerly.

"Perhaps Mr. S. Magna will hardly think he was the immediate cause of my presence here to-night."

He said truly how much pleased he was at the opportunity of making her acquaintance.

She told him her name was Delicia Reevedon, she had known his mother, and could not resist breaking through her usual quiet to see the son of one she had so admired and compassionated; that was in his father's very young days. She feared he remembered little or nothing of herself. She pressingly begged he would visit her at Rowan-hurst before leaving that part of the country; she thought she could tell him much about his parents which must be unknown to him; also there were other things she should like to communicate personally, even at the risk of his displeasure.

He warmly thanked her, although somewhat surprised at her mode of address; any information respecting those so early lost, and of whom he felt he knew comparatively nothing, would indeed be treasured. His pleasant conversation was soon interrupted by Lady Wiltonthorpe imploring him to go to Walter's rescue, he was beset by two young girls worrying him beyond endurance about church furniture, crowns, and ornaments; at least she had overheard some of those words, and although not very sympathetic, was really sorry to see him so bored.

Hilary thought if he were introduced it might perhaps cause a diversion.

"Thank you, I thought you might be counted upon."

He followed her across the room much amused,

and contrary to his expectations found the case pretty much as she had stated it. Poor Walter was fairly entrapped by two rather pretty girls, dressed in sober grey, with a profusion of black lace, the one wearing a string of jet round her waist, and from amid its largest beads, about the size of a pigeon-egg, depended a beautifully shaped cross, also of jet, which she held most conspicuously whenever she moved. The other wore no ornament of any kind, neither chain, bracelet, nor flower.

"Allow me to present Mr. S. Magna, Miss Coningham, Miss Alicia Coningham."

Both ladies bowed, smiled, fluttered, and blushed; evidently he had met with their approbation, the lady with the jet attacked him at once.

"I hope you are disposed to be more communicative than Mr. Wiltonthorpe; we want all sorts of information concerning Church matters, and he is most provokingly reticent."

Hilary cast one longing look at the door, with a vague idea of escape; all the humbug of technicalities about solemn things was most abhorrent to his taste and feeling.

"At a more fitting time and place," he began, "I will gladly impart every information desired, but do not you think it irreverent to drag forward such subjects in a gay worldly scene like the present?"

Miss Alicia Coningham replied, that she imagined a good Churchman would be instant in season and out of season; that all times and places should give way to the one prevailing thought.

Hilary felt much inclined to recommend a dose of humility, but reflecting it was the giddy thoughtlessness of youth, ever prone to run into extremes, and only deserving to be silently passed over, tried to turn the conversation by expressing

his love of music, and begging his taste might be indulged.

"Ah! I know something in that way you will appreciate, an 'Ora pro nobis,' newly set to original notes; I would not waste it upon Puritan ears."

"Nothing in that style, I pray of you," he said, hastily endeavouring to stay her, as she raised the jet cross preparatory to walking to the piano. If he might give them a few words of advice, it would be to restrain such religious feeling in general society; it was wrong in every way, and could only produce evil, lowering the whole tone by discussing it as a mundane subject.

"But," she said very naïvely, "what are we to do, Mr. S. Magna? we so love chanting, intoning, and all that sort of thing; there is nothing of the kind about here, and no one to impart such information, one is naturally curious upon an all-engrossing subject."

Hilary smiled, cautioning her to remember the solemnity of the subject; any one trying to raise for themselves a very high standard of life, would be unwilling at any time to say much upon religious impressions; exuberance of speech was always dangerous, leading to many actual faults, exaggeration and irreverence for instance. In the "Child's Christian Year" there were some verses bearing upon this, which if read aright would answer her better than he could. Perhaps it would increase the interest if he mentioned that they were written by one, to whom before his fall, all had looked up with so much hope, whose unhappy secession was a sad blow to the faithful. The lines were good, and perfectly free from error; he would with their permission forward a copy to each.

His tone and real gravity of manner effectually quelled their troublesome curiosity, so that they

were glad to retreat to the piano, where they were really valuable, playing and singing extremely well, and while they were so occupied the two friends beat a retreat, Hilary to conduct Mrs. Reevedon to her carriage, Walter to greet many an old acquaintance in the room.

That night, before retiring to rest, they both in the presence of Lord Wiltonthorpe placed old Susan's donation in the iron chest; each took the numbers of the notes, writing on the envelope the sum and how it was to be employed.

For the next few days Walter watched vainly for a private interview with his sister-in-law; first she was ill, not making her appearance until dinner, when she looked so brilliant it was impossible to admit that excuse; afterwards she was engaged in her husband's study with him on business until Hilary and Walter had laid their plans for the day: but he was not one to be deterred from his purpose by such trifling, therefore one morning he seized an opportunity of saying he should return to his curacy on the morrow unless he were allowed to clear himself. She valued his friendship too highly to permit of an open break, besides being somewhat alarmed: for in her husband's eyes Walter could do no wrong, and if his visit were curtailed, Lord Wiltonthorpe would in his somewhat slow but sure way, sift out the whole truth; and in the positive dismay with which she shrank from its disclosure, lay the most convincing proof of his entire freedom from blame: not that she feared Walter's part in the transaction, for often having tried him sorely, she was certain of more forbearance than she deserved; but she knew full well her husband's strong affection for his brother, how proudly he always acknowledged the latter's superiority, and that if he were created Metropolitan of the whole British Empire, it would

only be acknowledging his worth in a very remote degree in Lord Wiltonthorpe's estimation. So leading the way to her boudoir in rather a perverse manner, indolently seating herself, and pretending to cut the leaves of a new pamphlet, she signified her attention.

Apparently, now that his object was gained, it was difficult to open the subject, for Walter walked to the window, looked out, came back to the table, drew up a chair, and at length, with a sigh, began,—

“The other night, inadvertently, I offended you by assuming an undue share of importance, which I hope you forgave upon the spot, when I expressed my regret that any action of mine should be open to such a construction; or, if not entirely then, I trust you will do so now, when I again acknowledge it a fault, and pray your forgiveness.”

She merely bent her head, and he continued :

“Also, you accused me of a priestly ambition to rule all around, heedless of the domestic affections I trampled under foot in my thirst for power; such a state of things as that my very soul abhors, most unbecoming my relationship here, and a deadly sin in His servant whose extreme humility was the great sign of His Godhead. It is to clear myself from this grave charge I have insisted, somewhat against your inclination, I fear, upon this interview.” Again he paused. “I can hardly make you understand with what different motives, from those you impute to me, I have, as it were, forced upon Henry the building of this church; it was the cherished object of our boyhood; in our early manhood it was all but registered as a vow by both of us. Consider my office, and then say if I could have been held free from reproach had it all passed as a vapour: if you could read my heart, what an honour I think it to be allowed to raise a building to the glory and service of God; if I could

make you feel how blest they should think themselves who are permitted to do what was denied the royal Psalmist, how little importance I attach to the praise such a work may elicit from the world's opinion, you would judge me differently. We ourselves, must act perseveringly in God's vineyard, heedless of the din around; it is not what is thought on earth that must influence us, but how we stand with our Great Master. If a king sends an ambassador to a foreign land, is it not to forward his interests? to watch continually for his benefit? to seize every opportunity of working for the good of his sovereign? to be jealous for his dignity? Any one in that position, who did less, would be regarded as a traitor. So it is with us; we are the ambassadors of our God, the stewards of His mysteries, and, as such, required to be found faithful; we are bound by solemn vows to spend ourselves in His service, happy they who are permitted to sacrifice themselves for His honour! God forbid any clergyman should be supine in the present day, fearing the world's opinion, when an exceeding great cry has gone forth, and all our energies are taxed to the utmost. To be ambitious for our own rule is a fearful accusation; I have spent the time between your reproof and this in humble prayer and self-examination, trying to discover if any seed of this sin which ruined angels is germinating in my heart. I trust, I believe it is not so. Knowing well the consequence of indulgence in this one sin, you cannot think how sharp a pang you inflicted by accusing me of so accursed a thing."

He was interrupted by an imploring gesture.

"Stop, Walter, in mercy stop; I am utterly ashamed of myself, deep is my humiliation for such an ebullition of temper, repented of as soon as indulged in, only that I could not bring myself to acknowledge it."

Gradually she had ceased her frivolous occupation, a deep flush had overspread her face and throat, but whether of anger or contrition he had not been able to decide. Then she had listened attentively, becoming very pale; finally her countenance had been completely shaded by her hand, until a sense of her extreme injustice had elicited the above interruption. "Pray, forgive me," she continued; "you must have felt it was only temper, that I did not really mean what I said; I had been irritated, my jealousy had taken fright at what I thought was Henry's greater deference to your opinions. Other matters had vexed me; I was so thoroughly ill-humoured, it annoyed me to see you so happy, so perfectly unconscious of my increasing irritability. Can you forgive me, Walter?" she said, "I will try to improve; you may not think so, I have hitherto given you no reason to believe this; for, alas! my temper has in a greater or less degree always disturbed our intercourse. But I will curb—"

"Say no more, Adela, it is quite needless, I am sure you are sincere. I am not entirely free from blame, I should have been more observant, and not have tried you when you could least bear it; let us shake hands and forget this interlude in our otherwise pleasant relationship."

So they parted, each with a higher opinion of the other.

It really seemed now like setting to work in earnest; for very shortly afterwards the architect arrived, bringing with him plans, drawings, and estimates, saying one interview was worth a dozen letters. After much long discussion the site was approved. Lady Wiltonthorpe was again most amiable, furthering all Walter suggested by every means in her power, declaring he should have an east window, the most perfect of its kind, as her

own private gift, deferring to him in every way, and setting aside all her husband's scruples as to the sums required. Her brother-in-law was pained at the thoughtless manner in which she acted; good deeds done by fits are not to be depended upon. He knew it was only her kindly disposition, anxious now to atone for her former injustice; but this was not the way in which he would have had her work in such a cause; he had tried hard to make her see it a duty. If she had set about it humbly, quietly, counting every sacrifice, and conscientiously weighing the cost, it would have promised far better than the sudden fancy, which might at any moment veer round to the old quarter of jealousy and mistrust. She did all from excitement, and he would have had her work from principle.

Hilary was at Rowanhurst, and there he had learnt what was equally new and painful about his own family, and about his own position. Mrs. Reevedon told him where the missing packet was, and heartily he strove to feel the gratitude due for what he could but look upon as a direct answer from God to his sincere prayer. She told him that she had always understood by the old Dean's letters, that it would be an act of kindness to keep the secret of its existence in her family from Hilary altogether, and being unable to come to personal explanation with him, she had concluded he wished to enter into some engagement which he felt those papers would forbid, and therefore preferred to remain in voluntary ignorance. That they had never met before was to be accounted for by her long residence in India, from whence she had only lately returned; hearing he was to visit at Fontenelle, she had determined to see him and judge what course she should pursue. She had watched him closely on that occasion, had heard Walter's report of his friend, and reading aright

his truthful clear blue eyes and frank expression, had come to the determination to speak out and probe his secret mind.

He thanked her warmly for her trusting confidence, vainly trying to fathom the mystery of the warped light in which it had pleased his guardian to exhibit him, but deciding finally it was done in weak kindness, the old man not wishing his favourite's life to be clouded by a knowledge of the facts contained in those papers. He knew that Hilary was peculiarly isolated, having no near relations, or none at least with whom he ever came in contact, unless we mention a second cousin, the rector of a small Cornish living, whom he had visited at Wael-glyd one long vacation, as a young man. He had found him to be a parson of the old school, of whom mercifully so few remain now, who hunted whenever he had an opportunity, shirked all the services he possibly could, and what perhaps disgusted more than aught else his refined relative, committed the most unpardonable excess at table. They had parted at the end of three days, mutually glad to get rid of each other. Thus he was quite alone in the world; and doubtless his old friend wished him to form ties that would compensate for the lack of kindred, and knowing his character so well, had felt such would not be the case were he informed of all that lay in the background, at least of all the Dean imagined, for he himself knew little of the boy's history previously to his becoming his charge.

Upon his return one morning, while they were still lingering over the breakfast-table, Lord Wiltonthorpe volunteered to show him over the Home Farm, supposing Walter had not forestalled his intention. Hilary had not yet had that pleasure, and should be delighted, only his host must make allowances for his ignorance; although ashamed to

own it, he hardly knew a new plough from an old one. Lord Wiltonthorpe promised to enlighten him. Walter accompanied them, laughingly declaring Hilary looked as much afraid of committing himself as if he had never seen a farm-yard in his life.

This farm was Lord Wiltonthorpe's pet hobby, of which by the way he was justly proud, as it really was one of the prettiest in all England. The buildings were in imitation of those of the monks of Glastonbury, with high pointed roofs, latticed windows of many compartments covered with creepers. The house was inhabited by the bailiff, and was about half a mile from the great house. It was surrounded by a thick plantation, in which were conspicuous some of the finest specimens of the magnificent Spanish chestnut, the beautiful green of the fresh flat leaves contrasting pleasantly with the peculiar shades of almost every variety of fir. Some people might have thought it altogether too neat, and trim, and pretty for practical purposes; but to the uninitiated it looked a model of perfection. They entered the dairy, so charmingly cool on that hot July morning, floored with encaustic tiles, the pans all of rare old china, containing milk and cream of every gradation: in the centre, one of those peculiar fountains of Raphael-ware one sometimes meets with in Italy. Bustling about with the pride of conscious importance, was the deffest of Dolly Cowslips, making up the rich creamy butter into pats of every size and shape, to be carried to "the house."

Hilary noticed a large umbrageous tree shading the roof of the dairy, and was rather amused at Lord Wiltonthorpe's eager desire to cut it down; the bailiff, who had come out to join them, being apparently equally determined it should remain. Lord Wiltonthorpe was rather fond of clearing,

and had long marked this for the axe; while Roberts invariably made a determined fight for his favourite, under whose shade he smoked his pipe in the evening, chatting with any neighbour he could get to share his pleasant seat, while he discoursed of the superiority of farming in England, and also of his own particular theories on the subject. Roberts appealed to Hilary if it was not the perfection of shade which was formed by those wide-spreading branches, and certainly there was no denying this. Did he ever taste smoother or better butter and cream? That was equally decisive. Well, then, it was all owing to the effectual leafy shade which kept the place as cool as a cucumber. Lord Wiltonthorpe said he always intended having sunblinds for the dairy when this was removed. Roberts utterly despised sunblinds; what were they in comparison of such a screen from the fierce hot sun of to-day for instance?

Hilary ventured to inquire why the tree was doomed.

It was too large, took up too much room, and in the autumn created so much damp as to injure the hay-stacks. This last was the secret; in it lay the source of complaints, for there was nothing on the whole estate Lord Wiltonthorpe contemplated with such pride as these stacks, standing far enough off from the offender, one would have thought, to obviate any fear of damage: round, and trim, and bell-shaped they were, as hands could make them, each one raised on a wooden frame, as perfect as a picture, thatched as beautifully as any artist could desire. Walter always averred their construction cost as much as the hay was worth. Indeed the show-farm was a never-failing point of discussion between the brothers; the one declaring Roberts ought to make it self-paying, which he never did, and never would, while

he had his master's pocket to fly to. Having certain sums to make up, Walter affirmed he should be made to state how he proposed meeting them, and Lord Wiltonthorpe should turn a deaf ear to unforeseen failures of those theoretical experiments, which ought to produce wonders, but which by some inadvertency never succeeded. The cow-house was like a large room, with its lofty oaked roof: there were more than a dozen cows, each with its name over its stall, but somehow when the house was full of company supplies of cream and butter always ran short. In "Our farm of four acres," there is an amusing account of how the former went to sleep in the churn and refused to become butter, perhaps the same was the case here. The pigeon-house in the centre was acknowledged a model; it had cost a large sum, and was the prettiest feature in the yard. The poultry were all white, perfectly white, fowls, ducks, pigeons, geese, turkeys, not one had a coloured feather about it; these last were a continuous trouble, always requiring fresh importations, as they strayed to lay their eggs, and when found, if not addled or broken, the young perseveringly appearing with dark plumage. However, notwithstanding all drawbacks, Lord Wiltonthorpe considered his farm perfection, and himself a first-rate farmer; this was in fact the only thing upon which he prided himself.

As they strolled from one part to another, he enlightened his guest's ignorance wonderfully upon agricultural subjects, talking of his own in particular; and from that of farming in general, pointed out the many blunders constantly committed by those around; diverging thence into an essay upon foreign corn and cattle, until Hilary, who was expected to say something, observed he could never understand how it was, that in the south of

France and Italy, where the soil was so rich, the farmers should be always starving? His companion endeavoured to make him see that the mistake lay wholly in mismanagement; the soil was of course the source of sustenance, the fertility often wonderful, but the paying produce for rent solved the problem.

The farms were let generally for a term of only three years, not long enough to enable any one to indemnify himself for outlay: the tenants were ignorant and completely devoid of energy; the landlords gained little, and yet could not alter the system. Sometimes they were let to middlemen on the old Irish plan, the proprietor then being sure of his rent, but the poor tenant was ground to the dust; "in fact," he continued, "the people are sunk so low, as not to know their own interest: their indomitable laziness is the cause of all their misfortunes. People may talk and clamour as much as they will, and start off on mad expeditions, but the redemption of a country is impossible with such degenerate sons of the soil. I had some thoughts of inspecting farms and farming, closely, both here and in the south of France. I believe a few pamphlets on the subject, written by a practical person, would be a great boon to agriculturists generally; and some time or other, when Lady Wiltonthorpe and I want a holiday, and run away for a few months, we shall see what can be done. I believe it would only confirm beyond a doubt what I have just been saying. Some people I know hold very different and erroneous opinions on the whole matter, but you may rely upon my information, Mr. S. Magna. If you are not already tired, I should like to show you what patience and attention to a few simple rules can accomplish, in the face of difficulties that would have daunted any one less confident than I am.

That farm on the top of yonder hill was land of which I was very proud. Some years ago it was an arid, chalky spot, apparently dear at a gift; well, I bought it for a mere song, determined to try my plans, which were then theories, upon its cultivation, and now at the present time it more than pays itself, as even Walter allows."

Ben the carter was forthwith despatched for the horses, and as they cantered along, Hilary thought no foreign scenery of any description could surpass this morning ride. They traversed several fields, and lanes green as emeralds, laden with the perfume of wild flowers, with which they were literally enamelled, every leaf rendered musical by the airy songsters, and blending with the hum of the insects was the murmur of the ever-flowing sea. Soon they emerged upon the sands, and then turned off among the rocky crags; the vast expanse around was sparkling in its evanescent light, the sky above of the most ethereal blue, reproduced again below in the clear water; the sea gulls were cleaving the air in their rapid flight from point to point, seeming only to dip here and there for pleasure, and not for rest. On the other hand was all the rich vegetation for which this coast is so remarkable. Variety lent also its great charm, for they now came to a most secluded part, a narrow ledge of sand, with the waves on one side, and high, steep, indented rocks on the other.

As they rode along they were rather startled by a gentleman rushing up to them gesticulating most violently; they feared he was insane, as he was unable to articulate, his tongue inelegantly protruding, apparently the only part affected. In a moment Hilary had dismounted, although at a loss to know what should be done. The stranger pointed to, touched his mouth, but failed to make them understand his wishes.

Lord Wilonthorpe said that something must be the matter with his tongue: they examined it in vain. Hilary at last produced his pocket-book and pencil, and asked him to write what he could not say: a happy thought, for the poor man with symptoms of delight wrote, "On my tongue is a tiny shell, take it off carefully with the edge of the paper." Having achieved this difficult process, great were the thanks they earned. He was a conchologist in search of wonders; his life had been spent in forming a collection of certain shells, which he had given up all hope of perfecting for want of the only one he still required, which was about the size of a pin's point, and "Here it is," he exclaimed, joy beaming in his face. He had discovered it casually in a handful of sand, but his fingers being in the muddy state usual to savans, he had taken it up with his tongue, from whence he could not detach it without injury; he carefully placed the diminutive treasure in cotton wool, thanking them for their timely assistance.

"I do not understand much of science myself," said Lord Wilonthorpe, "but there is a cabinet of shells at the Abbey, considered valuable by the learned, which is very much at your service, if you should consider them worth inspection."

Savant thanked him warmly, and after exchanging cards the gentlemen continued their ride.

Before Hilary's visit drew to a close, he and Walter had a last long conversation on the subject which had so absorbed their attention in their first morning walk; but this time they deserted the broad terrace for Walter's favourite promenade, the sands, hard, smooth, unbroken, as they were left by the last flowing tide.

Anxiously Hilary awaited the promised counsel for his most complicated case, rendered more so than ever by Mrs. Reevedon's communication.

"I hold to the advice given to you on the spur of the moment," said Walter, "at our first discussion; lay the whole case in every particular before Miss Howard. Looking at it in all its phases, there remains but this one course,—happily the Church provides a remedy for those troubled in mind; you must seek assistance from 'some discreet and learned minister of God's Word.'"

Hilary reminded him he had done so.

"Of me you mean; that will not do; go to that good priest whom you so revere and love, and whose decision has been in several cases of such inestimable value to us both; lay the whole from beginning to end before him, in as matter-of-fact a way as possible; indeed in such cases, this is always the best course to pursue."

Hilary thanked him for the earnest attention he had bestowed upon his affairs, promising to follow this excellent advice, even before starting to hunt out George Reevedon, in whose hands the packet now was.

Upon bidding farewell to Lord and Lady Wiltonthorpe, they exacted from him the promise of a speedy return, as they expected him to be sufficiently interested in the church to come and watch its progress from time to time.

"By the way, Walter," said Lady Wiltonthorpe, "are we to have a grand day on the laying of the first stone, myself for instance in a *soigné* costume parading at the head of as many school children as can be collected for the occasion? or shall it be done quietly and sensibly?"

"Your own good taste has already decided the question," said Walter. "Certainly with as little parade as possible. You and Henry and I alone."

The three gentlemen had that morning dug a large hole between them, in order to make a beginning before they separated. A few days later,

and a crowd of workmen were congregated upon the same spot using pickaxe and spade to more purpose.

Happy Walter! who could go back to his curacy rejoicing that the one object for which he had striven so unflinchingly all his life, was by God's blessing about to be realised, for at last the building of the church was commenced.

CHAPTER VI.

DISCUSSION AND PREPARATION.

WHO that can avoid it stays in hot dusty London for those two most trying months in any city, July and August? None, we may safely aver, as the deserted streets sufficiently attest. The Howard family who, from their father's close attendance to business, remained longer than most people, had taken flight before the dog days.

Ah, those pleasant summer excursions! What large family does not remember the charm of them, before any break has taken place in the home circle? Always looked forward to with such lively anticipation, the settling a locality for eight or ten weeks, which should combine every possible advantage, involved so much discussion, each at the outset having his or her own pet place to advocate; for their's was open counsel, and all were expected to take part in the important decision, which for various reasons was this year more than usually difficult to arrange. Some had wished to go abroad, as had been the old custom until within the last few seasons, visiting many a little out-of-

the-way French coast town or Breton nook. Mary particularly voted for it this year; she had never been to Rouen, and wanted much to visit S. Ouen, or as she called it, Margaret Percival's church; all the rest had been there one summer when she had remained with her Aunt Bailey, who was at that time recovering from illness, and had begged her company to Malvern.

Kate did not wish to cross the Channel, perhaps from the feeling she would rather spend her last home holiday in her native land. Finally, Ernest was to give the casting vote. If he had uttered his inmost thought it would have been, While I am permitted to remain here, let me not leave England: some such opinion they gathered from his unselfish wish that they should not consider him at all; so after many pros and cons the Isle of Wight was decided upon. Truly they could scarcely have made a better choice; there the weeks flew by in calm unbroken happiness, all were charmed with the spot, and all were in the highest spirits, even anxiety for the precious invalid was in part laid aside, he seemed so well, and really gained strength, good appetite, rosy cheeks; above all, there was an absence of that irritability so constant a symptom in his case, and which with all his endeavours he could not always subdue.

Upon their return to town, he expressed himself so improved as to insist upon going daily with his father to business, saying he really felt up to anything, and had no excuse for an idle life, urging it so strenuously that it was at last settled according to his wishes. Mrs. Howard privately cautioned her husband against letting him do too much, inwardly resolving his company should be necessary very frequently to go out with herself and daughters. Mr. Howard was gratified at the arrange-

ment, he had a constitutional dread of any one's becoming a hypochondriac, which he thought must be the result of a habit of presumed ill health. He was not strong himself, and never had been, and therefore was much more sanguine about his son than his wife.

So affectionate a parent would willingly have spent any amount of his handsome fortune on the chance of benefiting his child. But alas! in that sad disease money avails not, no amount of skill can cause the heart to act aright when its powers are deficient. Still, with a man's facility of belief, he really was beginning to incline to the idea that old Bird was right after all, that it might be a nervous affection, which would pass off with maturer years. The mother had ceased combating what it was such a relief to rest upon, retaining her original opinion, but thankful that her darling was so well now, and trying to be satisfied with the present; his health had been a subject of deep prayer at the most solemn seasons, and she was content now to leave it in the hands of the God of love and mercy.

Charles was greatly surprised and pleased to see his father and brother come to the office together; the charm of Ernest's truthful character had extended itself even over their household (no small compliment), and Mrs. Charles hastened to congratulate her mother-in-law upon this improvement. She was all smiles and amiability, listening to the account of their sea-side trip, and of the mutual acquaintances whom they had met. She and her husband had been visiting about at different places, and consequently she was able and willing to contribute a large budget of news. At length she asked if they had heard anything of Euphine Silvertown? Mrs. Howard hoped she had met with some situation to suit her.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Charles; "but in a different way from what you expect: she is going to make a most brilliant marriage. A certain Mr. Huntly, of some place in Hertfordshire, worth some thousands a year, is engaged to her. Certainly, he is somewhat younger than herself, and they do say rather deficient in understanding, but nothing to signify."

"What!" exclaimed both girls; "marry such a person; she must be mad."

"Nonsense," said Julia, "he is not quite bright, perhaps, and that is all; it matters less in this case as she is strong-minded and firm, and will supply his deficiencies: besides, who would think of throwing away such an advantageous offer for a trifle?"

"I hope, Julia," said Mrs. Howard, "you will discover all particulars and write a little good advice to your friend. Riches form a very small part of the happiness of married life: want of intellect is a terrible evil, from the fact that it may increase with years. Besides, there may be other evils too shocking to dwell upon."

"But you appear to forget her poverty," answered Julia; "her father has left a bare pittance for her mother and herself. She must have been either a governess or companion, for either of which I know you thought her very unfit; therefore so excellent a home with great wealth entirely at her own disposal, is not to be despised. She is, you know, somewhere near thirty, and not likely to have many more offers, so she had better reflect well before rejecting this."

"Euphine always seemed a very kindhearted person," said Mary; "I should be sorry to hear of her being made miserable for life."

Julia appeared to think they were all up in arms at a myth. "I shall not interfere," she said;

"Euphine is quite old enough to judge for herself, and I should not feel justified in dissuading her from what seems an interposition of Providence to replace her in her original position."

"Or a temptation to be resisted on principle," said Mrs. Howard.

Julia tossed her head, an action that always evinced her entire disapproval. "Mrs. Silverton is quite capable of advising her daughter," she replied, "and is highly pleased with the match, so no one else has a right to interfere."

As none could gainsay what was self-evident, the subject was dropped.

She soon rose to take leave, announcing their intended departure to the sea-side for a few weeks, Fanny's health required it, and as Ernest was now able to attend to business, Charles could very well be spared.

Fanny had spent that morning in Harley Street; every one had thought the child particularly well, and said so. Her mother however persisted they were all wrong, she had no appetite, and one of her ankles was weak; to the sea they must go. She had fought a hard battle with Charles about it, he obstinately seeing no cause for running off again; but he had at last yielded. They should go to Brighton, she understood Mr. John Vaughan was there with his family; and although she had sufficient cause to dislike him, particularly as he had succeeded to her uncle's fortune, when it should have been left to herself; still he was both rich and influential, and upon mature consideration she had come to the conclusion people should forget and forgive, thus persuading herself she was acting up to a right Christian principle, instead of indulging in covetousness, which was her besetting sin. She had made her child's health a reason for carrying her plans into execution.

If people would only test their motives by daily self-examination, how few comparatively would go carelessly on from bad to worse, hardly conscious of the inclined plane they so gradually but so rapidly descend.

Mrs. Howard expressed her regret; she had counted upon her help in arranging for Kate's marriage.

Julia was charmed to be made useful for such a purpose, and begged nothing might be settled about the wedding dress and finery until her return.

Kate laughed, saying there seemed so much to be done first, that the wedding dress loomed far in the distance.

Mary reminded them September had set in: Arthur she knew when he once arrived would not expect much delay. Her mother thought there was plenty of time for the actual toilette and its accompaniments; at all events, she could do nothing in it without Julia, therefore she really must curtail her Brighton visit; they would in the meantime expedite all the other business.

Many and many a poor person dependent upon her needle for support, had reason to bless Miss Howard's trousseau, cheered with the prospect of employment and liberal pay. For the ladies took the trouble to seek out those whom it was the greatest kindness to employ; and Mrs. Howard in her usual quiet, judicious manner contrived to impart hope and comfort to all with whom she came in contact.

They were one day leaving the church after the five o'clock service, when a deep well known voice caused them to start in surprise, and they were warmly greeted by Hilary.

"You see I know where to find you at this particular hour," as he spoke his eyes comprehended

all the party. "I hope all are well," he added quickly, missing Ernest's slight figure.

They answered promptly, forestalling the inquiry on his lips, "Ernest is quite strong, the sea air has done him so much good, he insists upon taking his place in the firm, and adheres to business hours daily."

And now to answer for himself, what had he been doing?

He told them he had been actively employed, and detailed his visit in the west, and his Oxford engagement, &c. Thus hearing and imparting news, they walked home, Mrs. Howard taking it as a matter of course that he was now their lawful prey.

He laughingly admitted having presumed upon her accustomed hospitality, in which hope he had finished all his commissions and left these few hours clear.

They all exclaimed at so short a stay.

He assured them, that however unwillingly, he must hasten back, and was piling reason upon reason for not remaining in rather an incoherent manner, when Mr. Howard and his son opportunely appeared; the latter soon carried Hilary off to his own sanctum. There Ernest was at once led by his friend's warm interest in all his proceedings, to talk of himself, Hilary listening with pleasure to his spirited account of their holiday trip, and openly expressing his delight at his improved health.

"Yes, I am better, much better, but do not be deceived, for I am not; the disease is still here, stayed only for awhile; I hope all may go well until after Kate's wedding. By the way, what a good fellow Arthur is! I am thankful to look forward to the comfort and support my dear mother will find in him when her great trial

comes, and you also will be here and will assist him."

Hilary wrung his hand. "Are you so sure that your condition is hopeless?" he said, looking into his beautiful bright eyes, whose enlarged pupils told of constitutional weakness.

"Yes, I feel confident of what I have now told you, there is no one else to whom I speak so freely. Will you be as much with me as you can? I know I may exact this of your friendship."

"My greatest happiness is at your side. Most willingly will I give you all the time at my own disposal."

Ernest smiled in his own natural way, saying, "Perhaps there were other attractions in the house?" To his extreme surprise his friend hid his face in his hands, trembling with some great emotion. At that moment they were summoned to dinner, and as he linked his arm within Hilary's it pained him to observe the ashy pallor of his face.

All were interested in the church about to be erected at Fontenelle Abbey. Mary hoped it would be in the same style as their own, "The Holy Angels;" making due allowance of course, as whatever they might do it must still be inferior to a church which even Pugin had pronounced perfect.

"Always excepting the two pillars of imitation marble at the entrance of the chancel, which distress you so much, Mary," said Ernest, "is it not so?"

"Yes," said Hilary, addressing Mary, "even your enthusiasm must admit that defect. By the way, how your choir is improved, I was quite struck with their precision. If the organist only played as well as they sing, there would be nothing more to desire; the clear young voices blend so

well with that full rich bass. It must require tolerable funds to keep it up."

"No, the boys are chosen from the school, only a few of the men are paid; and the rich voice which you show your usual taste in admiring belongs to a gentleman of large fortune, who is happy in being permitted thus to exercise his talent."

"That hymn, the perfection of simplicity, was lovely; it is ringing in my ears now."

"I am glad you happened to come on a festival, it is the same to which they sing 'S. Edward the Confessor,' a great favourite of mine, and of most others also, I believe."

"That name," said Mary, "reminds me of the greater sympathy one always feels with a Confessor than a Martyr; it seems a more attainable calling, not so high a state as to be unapproachable: it comes so much nearer home. Of course it is a less exalted state, but even in these days of self-indulgence one might possibly be a confessor."

"Define the term," said Ernest.

"Oh, a Confessor is one who sacrifices himself in some way to devote his life to God. For instance, if any one were placed very happily here, and saw opening before him a long vista of earthly enjoyments with those he loved most, and although there might be no positive demand for relinquishing such happiness, if he yet gave it up of his own will, freely to devote himself in singleness of purpose to God's glory, and so suffered for the faith, would he not be a Confessor like that good Bishop, all honour to him, who left friends, riches, and power, to go to a far off distant land, exposing himself to all dangers, risking all to carry to the heathen the good tidings of salvation. In short, I don't know whether I make myself clearly understood, but to sum up in a few words, a Martyr

gives up all, even life itself; a Confessor gives up all short of life."

"And should you deem it right," said Hilary, "for any one to act according to your illustration if, in following it out they sacrificed the happiness of another?"

"That is a case I have not contemplated," she answered; "but few would be so exacting as selfishly to interfere with a religious vocation, at least none who had been well instructed in their duty. Why to help another on such a path would be in part to identify themselves with the privilege and enjoy it in reflected light."

"Bravo, Mary!" said Ernest. "You would beat the American ladies at lecturing."

"Mary seldom takes the trouble to make herself heard," said Kate; "such a long disquisition is quite unusual to her. When we were all children, Oliver Bayley used to tease her by trying to make her argue a point with him, in which she always failed from constitutional shyness."

Mrs. Howard broke up the conversation by rising from the table; apparently it was taking a dangerous turn, for the present at least she desired her nephew should be mentioned as seldom as possible, added to which she shrank nervously from his name being coupled, however insignificantly, with that of her youngest daughter. On Mary's side she knew there was nothing to fear, but latterly her suspicions had been aroused by remarks and hints, both from Oliver and his mother, a state of affairs to which she particularly objected.

Early in the evening Hilary rose to take leave. His departure was vigorously opposed by Mr. Howard and the whole family, they begged for one day more, only one. It was impossible, he replied; he must return to his college on the morrow, from thence to Staffordshire on business of

importance. Unwillingly they were obliged to yield, Ernest loudly expressing his regret, and whispering to him Kate had a favour to ask, to which he must listen. He turned to her at once, and blushing she admitted that both Arthur and herself hoped he would officiate at their marriage service.

Few things would give him such undivided pleasure, Hilary replied, but Arthur had several relations who were high dignitaries of the Church, would not one of them be the proper person; for instance, Dr. Banks, the Archdeacon?

Kate said they should be sadly disappointed if he refused. All the proprieties had been considered, and Arthur quite depended upon Hilary.

The affair was settled: he thanked Kate for paying him such a compliment, and promised to take up his quarters with them whenever he should be summoned.

In the railway carriage that night, on his way back to Oxford, he tried seriously to consider which was his nearest duty at the present time: did he owe it to the dead or to the living? His short interview with Ernest had touched all the deepest feelings of his sensitive nature; it seemed almost of paramount importance that he should be ever at his side, now that life was ebbing, passing away with the fading autumn, the first low moaning winds creeping up with the new year might chant a requiem over his new made grave. Then on the other hand his unhappy father's commands, whatever they might entail, were in existence. A few days, at most a week, would put him in possession of them. Ought he not to set his mind at rest on that point, shrinking as he did from what he feared they might involve. To such conflicting doubts there is but one satisfactory way of obtaining a decision, the result of his long deep prayers was a confirmation of his

previous idea. A hasty journey westward to obtain the packet, and then he would arrange for spending the next few months with Ernest.

For some days the girls were thoroughly occupied. Every one knows the thousand and one things which have to be done on such occasions. They did not however forget to go and inquire about Betsy Dawes, who was in a place as general servant, on the other side of London, far inferior to the one she had forfeited by her own folly, but still better than being at home exposed to a variety of temptations. Mr. Fordholme had exerted himself in her favour during their absence, and had succeeded in placing her at some distance from the too fascinating Tom, hoping their lovers' quarrel would never be made up, as he was quite a *mauvais sujet*, and would indubitably lead the young girl into trouble.

Mrs. Dawes told them her Betsy was very hard worked, and not well, observing, if gentlemen could not do better than that for poor girls, their help was not worth having, for they could find such places for themselves.

Mary was highly indignant, begging Mrs. Dawes would use more respect and greater discretion in remarking upon a clergyman; if Betsy conducted herself well, and gave satisfaction, Mr. Fordholme would in all probability exert himself in her favour.

"Ay, ay! 'pigs may fly, but they are unlikely birds,'" was the ungracious rejoinder, conveyed in such a threatening voice and manner, that French, their mother's maid, who was always their chaperon on these occasions, in some trepidation persuaded them to beat a hasty retreat.

On Mrs. Charles's return to town, she came to spend a long day in Harley Street, delighted to be foremost in the preparations going on, and very

naturally reverting from those in hand to her own wedding, dilating in the pride of her heart upon the superior magnificence attending a bridal from a gentleman's country seat ; assuring them a girl went forth with much greater prestige under such circumstances than could possibly accrue to one married in the quiet unostentatious manner which they had decided as best on the present occasion.

"But the point to settle just now is the bride-maids, how many, Kate, and whom? I do not think we have ever yet discussed them at all ; but I dare say you two have alone."

Kate said she had no wish for any parade, the quieter it was all done the better she should be pleased. Mary and little Fanny should bear the burdensome honour.

Julia was shocked ; such a miserable exhibition was unheard of ; six at the very least, eight or twelve would be better.

Vainly Kate urged that she had never made young lady acquaintances ; she knew so few, and should not care to be attended by mere strangers. She had forgotten though, there was to be a young cousin of Arthur's not out, who would come up to town for the occasion and stay with his aunt, so that would be three.

Ridiculous, Julia still declared, only Mary and that young girl, for Fanny would not count. Luckily it was herself who made that speech, or dire offence would have been the result of putting her darling so decidedly aside.

The discussion was prolonged until dinner time, when Mrs. Howard was called upon to give her opinion. A compromise was then agreed upon, and six young ladies were chosen ; the two already mentioned, two Miss Elvastons, near neighbours, their cousin, pretty Maude Elliot, a niece of Mrs. Howard's, and a relation of Julia's.

Mrs. Charles would not take her departure until every iota was arranged concerning their dress, and she was determined that if she were to have the credit of all the minute details, at least there should be nothing to find fault with.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WEDDING.

THE important morning dawned bright and sunny, as occasional days are granted to us thus late in the season; all the more beautiful, and the more cherished, because we feel that they are the last efforts of the expiring year.

Some pressing business had detained Hilary until the very day previous to the wedding, when he made his appearance accompanied by Walter Wiltonthorpe, who expressed his gratification at being introduced to Miss Howard, hoping he might become intimately acquainted with Lady Musgrave. Of course he was invited to the breakfast, where also there was another unexpected stranger. When Mrs. Bayley was announced, who should follow close in her rear but Oliver, his usual saucy manner no whit abated by the knowledge that he was supposed to be studying hard at Heidelberg, in addition to the fact of his being in great disgrace with his uncle.

Ernest was the first to step forward and greet him warmly; they had spent almost all their boyhood together, and although so utterly dissimilar in character, were fast friends; the delicate unpretending youth exercising more sway over this

bold, haughty, presuming mind than any other living being.

The pale, thoughtful bride was naturally the centre of attraction, "Not tall enough to wear her veil with dignity, but otherwise looking very well," as Mrs. Charles whispered to her neighbour.

The gentle sister hovered close to her elbow, scarcely conscious of all the bustle around, alive only to one great fact, that she was about to lose now her childhood's friend; that however loving and confiding Kate might continue to be, they could never again be as they had been, each all in all to the other.

The bridegroom seemed almost by his tone and manner to be making an apology to the quiet mother for carrying off, what was in his eyes, her most precious jewel.

And then what confusion at the moment of starting, Kate relinquishing her father's arm even when her foot was on the carriage step, to bestow another last kiss upon Ernest, who was all life and spirits; he and Oliver Bayley having begged from his mother's maid one slender shoe, a part of the bridal attire, to throw after them, the latter's vigorous arm hitting the mark bravely.

Mrs. Howard thought a worn out white shoe would have been more strictly in accordance with the old practice; but Ernest persisted that the charm lay in the identical chaussure worn by the bride; the reason the customary practice had so little effect was because people ignorantly substituted an old one. Then as they drove off the large old-fashioned balcony was filled instantaneously by the family striving to catch a last glimpse of Kate and her husband.

Under cover of the confusion most of the guests departed; kind-hearted Mrs. Merton, all satins and

smiles, lingering in the hope of exchanging a few eulogistic words with Mrs. Howard, in the midst of which noticing Mary at her elbow, she put in a spasmodic expression of sympathy for her dear young friend. Mary acknowledged her kindness by calling attention to her finger, whereon glittered a ring that lady had enclosed in Kate's wedding present.

Many of us have felt the cheerless desolation of such a day, when the guests have all departed, the rooms lately filled with happy flushed faces looking deserted and miserable, the few necessarily remaining not knowing how to dispose of themselves.

The weather proving fresh and exhilarating, the gentlemen started for a long walk, saying they would be back to a late tea. Ernest was resting in his own sanctum, a necessary precaution after the morning excitement. Mrs. Howard and Mary having exchanged their gay apparel sat together, the thoughts and words of both naturally reverting to their lost darling,—lost now from the exclusiveness of their own circle; picturing her life of useful happiness in her new home, the centre of all attraction there, herself and Arthur the Lord and Lady Bountiful of the surrounding villages; the mother winding up her eulogium of both her girls by a heavy sigh as her eye fell upon the vacant seat at her side.

"Ah, mother, dear!" said Mary, following her glance, "we will have no more partings, you and I will grow old together."

"For perhaps one year," was the answer, "and then this day with its hopes and trials will be again repeated. Such is the interpretation of that phrase in a young lady's mouth." And she endeavoured by the last few words to communicate a lighter tone to both herself and her daughter.

But Mary still retained the serious look, which indeed settled deeper on her face as she repeated that in her case there should be no more partings.

"And yet I have been reminded to-day how much a certain handsome guest of mine prefers your society."

"Ah, that is Julia's doing," she asserted hastily. "I do not know how the idea has sprung up, but to my horror the other day she adverted to the subject, at least she used some ambiguous words, which made me most uncomfortable, so that I was obliged to speak out and crush such nonsense at once."

"It strikes me the remarks fell upon a guilty conscience," said her mother smiling.

Mary continued: "I wish to stop such ideas, because they are unfounded; now will you help me, mother dear? I have been trying ever since that day to make an opportunity to speak openly to you upon this most distressing subject, but in the whirl and bustle of the late preparations I could never hit upon the right moment to begin; and now that I have found it I hardly know what to say, such a thing is entirely out of the question, and it is most harassing to me that it should have been thus openly broached. Julia ought to be silent, and not presume to couple our names together. Hilary will never marry, so much I can decidedly aver; we had some conversation upon his personal affairs to-day: he will pass a single life. You know, mother, many of the wisest and best in the Church now advocate that state for many of our Clergy; this is a point for them to settle individually, and those who act upon it as a principle are greatly to be honoured."

"That is an argument far beyond me, Mary, therefore I shall not enter upon it. I should be sorry to blame Hilary, even in thought, but whether

intentionally or otherwise, he certainly has paid you great attention, which if he entertains those opinions cannot be too soon put a stop to."

"Mother, indeed you misjudge him altogether; only talk to Ernest, and see how high principled and excellent are his actions, in whatever circumstances he may be placed. At the present time he is so depressed, I am sure he is labouring under some painful convictions in connection with his family; and Ernest, who we may be sure is in his confidence, says he is exercising his usual self-abnegation in remaining with him as he has promised to do."

"Your father told me he had induced him to pay us a visit of some weeks, so that if there is anything on his mind we may be able to help him; at all events, I shall have an opportunity of judging for myself. I believe him to be peculiarly unfettered, and at perfect liberty to gratify himself in the choice of his future career."

During their long walk, Mr. Howard and Oliver found themselves a little in advance, and as that gentleman never could withhold anything he had made up his mind to say, he began at once lecturing his nephew upon the audacity of his return without permission. It was useless however to take an injured tone with one who would not see he was in disgrace; for when he even thought it necessary to defend himself, he did so in a light airy manner, which was exceedingly offensive to his uncle, talking and laughing as if they were on the most amicable terms.

"Of course, my only wish has been to do honour to my pretty cousin's wedding. We have all lived together in such close relationship, that no one could have supposed I would be absent on so important an occasion. I did not write my intention, because I of course concluded that I was expected.

I have not the happiness of having a sister, but you know I look on my cousin in that light: it would have been a source of regret for the rest of my natural life, if I had failed to attend her to church."

Mr. Howard interrupted him by some rather gruff remark upon his glib tongue, apparently his German studies had not detracted from his loquacity.

"Speaking of that, sir, naturally brings me to that tall Irishman, who performed the ceremony with so much affectation, that intoning being only adopted, I dare be sworn, to exhibit his rich vibrating voice, devoid of the brogue it is true, but which would in this case be an advantage."

"He has this advantage over you, that he does not chatter conceitedly like a magpie, of what he knows nothing about."

Oliver's free and easy remarks were becoming intolerable to his uncle, who was chafing at his well assumed unconcern, and utterly unconscious of the sidelong merry glances cast in his direction, for nothing pleased that young gentleman more than to exercise the power of irritating those, who, according to the merits of the case, were his censors for the time; and in this instance, having taken rather more wine than usual, he did not feel inclined to restrain his volubility, for he was exerting himself to ward off any lecture that might be in store for him. Long ago he had conceived an incipient dislike to Hilary, thus an attack upon him in any shape or form, was a safety valve to vent his spite.

"You prefer the silent ones, then, uncle, cogitating for hours, brooding over their thoughts; never making themselves nor any one else the wiser or the better for them by a single remark. I cannot say that is to my taste, for such people always

remind me of the nigger proverb, 'Still water de deepest, and him deble lie at de bottom.' Now as a priest, he would be shocked at the devil's name; nevertheless, I'll be bound there are circumstances connected with himself or his belongings which he would rather keep quiet. Of course, like all Paddies, he is the first of his family that ever went out to get a living, and equally of course he is descended from a long line of ancestors, beginning with Adam and ending with himself. By the way, how comes it he is not a Roman Catholic?"

"Attend to your own business, sir, and don't interfere with others a vast deal better than you will ever be," interrupted Mr. Howard in no very gentle voice.

"I remember, he is carrying on that flirtation with the Scarlet Lady, beginning to assume a dangerous phase, is it not so?—writing himself a Priest of the H. C. A. C.? So do the Irvingites, so also do the Romanists. I fear he is on his road to South Italy, eh, uncle? But I should like to go through the subject with him: for you must know, notwithstanding my other laborious studies, I have gone deeply into theology, it being a subject so universally discussed now-a-days, I did not think it should be passed by without serious consideration. I am sure you quite concur with me in this opinion."

Mr. Howard muttered some words, not loud, but deep, which Oliver interpreted in his own way.

"Yes, as you justly observe, I have much to say on that point, which I should certainly prefer discussing with Mr. S. Magna himself, only if you desire it I will—"

But he was cut short, for his uncle could contain his indignant wrath no longer.

"If you do not listen to me, you puppy, I'll

make you. Answer my questions without troubling your head about persons and things far enough removed from you in all ways."

Oliver had recourse to another sly look, but perceiving he was going too far, thought fit to change his tone and enact a little penitence.

"Certainly, my dear uncle, if I had thought there was any one point upon which you desired to interrogate me, I should have been silent at once."

"I wish then you would be so now, and listen to what I have to say about certain papers, signed by you and presented at my office. How dared you, sir, with all your impudence, presume to act thus? How dared you, by giving my name and address, make me a partner in your disgraceful transactions?"

"My dear uncle, if you will give me a quiet, considerate hearing, I will tell you the whole affair without reservation; in fact, when you are acquainted with my motives, I am sure I shall rise in your estimation."

Mr. Howard said there was room for it.

"Well, then, not to trumpet forth my own good deeds, to which I have a great antipathy, I will have it out.

"I had a fellow-student named Gostenhofer, he comes from a remote part of the Black Forest, and should be, I imagine, a grand seigneur; but you know all German nobles are as poor the one as the other. I have often wondered, by the way, what has become of their riches. If one were in a speculative mood, it might be worth while to consider the question."

"Which it is not," broke in his companion, "so keep to your point."

Oliver cleared his throat; even he was getting rather abashed.

"Well then, sir, this said Gostenhofer was in the same predicament as his confrères, and as proud as Lucifer; I knew that he was particularly in want of money, and saw no way of alleviating his necessity, for nothing would have induced him to own as much, neither would he have lowered his dignity to borrow, much less accept cash from me, albeit I was his great chum. So I had recourse to a little harmless gambling just to put some dollars into his pocket, for no other reason I assure you, merely a philanthropic negotiation! You would say we should not do evil that good may ensue; true, for see how a deviation from this wisest of axioms has brought its own punishment. Instead of losing only the sum I wished thus delicately conveyed to my friend's pockets in order to spare his sensitive feelings, I rose from the table deeply in debt, a victim to my benevolent intentions. Still in this case so far removed from all ordinary rule, I feel sure of your concurrence, however unusual the line of action I have adopted."

Fortunately at this moment the rest of the party joined them, thus preventing the explosion that would otherwise inevitably have followed. Mr. Howard had only time to cast on him one look of irrepressible anger, exclaiming, "You young rascal!" which sent Oliver quickly to the rear, his bold blue eye dancing with delight at the storm he had raised, felicitating himself upon his skill in thus communicating his *rouge et noir* propensities; not that he for a moment believed he had imposed upon his uncle, he knew him to be far too keensighted for that, but he really wanted to let him know he had been gambling, in order to pave the way for the introduction of the much larger debts he had to confess. In fact, it was because he was so hemmed in by monetary difficulties, that he de-

cided upon coming to London for the wedding, having pledged himself to return to Heidelberg and answer all demands within a certain time.

Some few days had passed, and the family were gradually returning to their usual avocations, trying as best they might to fill up the void such a loss engenders. Ernest's spirits had flagged after the important event, troublesome symptoms were again thrusting themselves forward, the business habits were discontinued; possibly he might not have felt equal to the daily city journey, but the ostensible reason for it was that his mother had pleaded the near approach of November, that baleful month, always demanding extra wraps and care. So he and Hilary spent the greater part of the day together. The latter had been writing, and as he sealed the last letter his companion said,

"Now I hope you are at liberty, for I want your assistance in shaping out a plan that has been fermenting in my brain for months past."

The other signified his attention, for he knew by Ernest's flushing and paling cheek, and a certain solemnity of manner, that whatever they were about to discuss would bear upon his early death; and he loved him so well, that now he had begun to treasure up all expressed wishes and directions, knowing how eagerly they would be required of him hereafter.

"Feeling as I do," began Ernest, "that my time here may be short, God knows, I must work without delay; at least, what I mean is, that with a confirmed organic disease, it will not do for me to wait until I am strong enough to set about it myself. I must be idle, but I may delegate to others what I cannot accomplish myself."

Hilary affectionately laid his hand upon the delicate one beside him, as if accepting the trust, but he did not speak, and the other continued.

"It was one among the many sermons you have preached to us at the 'Holy Angels,' which gave me the idea I am going to mention. You had been telling of the miraculous feasting of the five thousand in the desert, and your energetic winding up lingered so forcibly in my mind, that I hope it has produced the fruit you intended; I think, although some months have passed, I can even repeat your exact words. 'Churches to be endowed, schools to be founded, hospitals to be built,—these are baskets in which to gather the fragments that nothing be lost.'"

He paused awhile, as if uncertain how to express his thoughts.

"I believe my father to be a very rich man, far more wealthy in fact than the world would give him credit for. My dear parents are so unostentatious, that in these days of false show and glitter, when every one makes all possible display, the generality living on the very verge of ruin, people living so quietly as we do would naturally be put down as lacking riches. Such however, I am sure, is not the case; therefore, if my life were prolonged, some portion of this wealth would be enjoyed by me. Lately I have thought that with their sanction I should like to found and to give vitality and action to an institution, which by God's blessing might assist the poor suffering sick when I am at rest: a home for incurables, those who by disease, are incapacitated for the duties of life. My thoughts have been led up to this lately, partly from my own infirmities, which keep me ruminating in the chimney corner when other youths of my age are abroad and stirring; partly from a case which has come under my notice of a young man, perhaps twenty-five, living in a small street at the back, he is in incurable consumption, he cannot get into any hospital for a

permanency, oftentimes he cannot work, so that being poor he is in danger of starving."

Ernest did not add his own provision for him effectually prevented all fear of the last-named misery.

"If I were in his case, homeless and friendless, or even if I knew all the extra attention I require was only to be obtained at the expense of my friends, and that for every indulgence they must deprive themselves of something needful, how sad it would be, how much anxiety it would occasion. Now as far as may be, I should like to meet such cases. Such a fragment I should like to offer up; but I do not know how to put it into form."

"You would institute a perfectly free home; a similar asylum has I believe long been wanted. Among all our charitable institutions, and we may rejoice at their increasing number, it seems as if this peculiar one had been overlooked," said Hilary. "About what sum do you propose devoting to it? of course it should be moderate. I think you know under existing circumstances you should not expect your father to disburse anything like what you may suppose might some day be your share of his wealth."

"My dear father," said Ernest, "is little likely to refuse any wish of mine; you know his extreme fondness, upon which I would in no way presume. I have thought of five thousand to begin with. What say you?"

"There could be no objection to your mentioning that sum."

"I should like," continued Ernest, "to purchase some good convenient house in this neighbourhood; I wish it to be somewhere near here, where I have passed all my most happy life. Perhaps there would be accommodation for six of each sex; and I think a clergyman ought to live there, to be at hand and see to them."

Hilary was afraid that could hardly be managed.

"Well, then, supposing there were an endowment of fifty pounds per annum, for one of the curates of the 'Holy Angels' to perform a daily service, and take care of their spiritual welfare?"

"Something in that way might be done. The endowment had better be vested in a body of trustees, whom you must choose, and of whom the senior curate of the 'Holy Angels,' and the perpetual curate of S. Peter's for the time being, and in all future time, should be members."

"Yes, yes," said Ernest, quite excited, "that is good; you see I could not shape it into words."

"There must also be a physician, surgeon, a matron to attend to the household, and servants; I wonder how many?" questioned Hilary. "We may calculate on some of the patients being able to wait on themselves, and some of course will be wholly dependent upon others."

"And," said Ernest, "I wish it to be inserted in the rules, that good fires shall be kept all over the house; I know how chilly I often feel, though I have every comfort. But go on, Hilary, I like to hear you plan it out, it is putting my thoughts into words."

"We must also regulate the yearly expenditure, or your charity may be abused as others have been. Let me see, averaging the weeks,—I am sure I hardly know what sum would be necessary, we must apply to Mrs. Howard for help in that, sometimes the Home may not be full—"

"Stop," interrupted the other, "the Home must always have its number filled up. There will be many more incurables than we can accommodate; and if at any time there should be a vacancy without an application, one must be sought: if properly managed, such a contingency cannot occur."

He threw himself back in his arm-chair rather exhausted by the last decisive remark, and Hilary, unwilling to continue the subject at the present time, also remained silent. At last he caught those large speaking eyes fixed wistfully upon his face.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"I wish you would consent to be overlooker, visitor, warden, whatever is the proper title."

He raised his head quickly from sketching a ward containing minute beds and a huge fire-place.

"It pains me to refuse your slightest request, but it cannot be; my work lies far distant."

"Is it a distaste for the office? or is it that you would not be able to undertake it?"

"The latter," he whispered hoarsely, trying vainly to stifle the convulsive spasm that all but choked him. "I am not to be counted on." And the voice usually so liquidly clear sounded harsh and abrupt.

Ernest regarded his companion sorrowfully; painful thoughts had been suggested to him about Hilary, his dearest friend. Suggestions he had thrown from him with scorn, for he would have counted it disloyal to doubt his faith; but as he sat there, bowed and stricken by a chance word, what could he think? The truthful character, firm in its honesty of purpose, came to his aid, simplifying, as perfect open truth ever does, all difficulties.

"Hilary," he said, hesitatingly, but with a determination to sift the matter, "I have no right to presume upon your love, but I have noticed lately that you are changed, not in your affection for me, for that I think increases, but you are different; I fear there is some painful subject upon which your mind is dwelling; nay, I am sure it is so, and may I not share your grief?"

Whatever it is, I will not doubt you ; your actions, I am certain, will always redound to your credit and honour. If not quite impossible, I wish you would confide in me ; true, I could be no help, I cannot even assist you by advice, for you are too much my superior ; only I would offer you my ready sympathy, a poor comfort, whose only recommendation is its sincerity. But perhaps it is a secret not your own."

Hilary drew his chair closer, saying he had always intended confiding in his dearest friend ; for his mental burden there was no alleviation at the present moment, only an unflinching rectitude in the stern path of duty, could in his case bring with it the calm he had not yet learned to attain.

"Surely it cannot be that you meditate secession from our beloved Church?"

"Never!" he exclaimed, with so hearty an emphasis, that both faces wore a brighter look for the moment. "Thanks be to God I have no shadow of doubt ours is a branch of the TRUE Church, founded by CHRIST Himself, and watered by the blood of the Apostles and Martyrs. No, I have no doubt," he again repeated emphatically. "But whence arose so terrible an idea in connection with myself?"

"Some things Oliver Bayley said the other night. You must have observed he bears you no great love, and I was trying to convince him how unjust an attack he was making upon you by supposing you a Jesuit ; whereupon he averred that in so saying he was paying you the highest of compliments."

"I must say I feel anything but flattered. Did he condescend to give any reasons for his opinions?"

"Oh, as to that, you know by this time his absurd ideas, flying off at a tangent when one wants

a straightforward answer, or hazarding some bold doctrine which makes one shudder, finally losing himself in a maze of metaphysics."

Even as he spoke the door opened, and in walked the gentleman in question.

"Talk of an angel and you hear the flutter of his wings," said Ernest, as he shook hands.

"Ho, ho!" laughed Oliver; "I'm a different sort of an angel to those Mr. S. Magna is used to," and he contrived to look as if he meant a great deal more than met the ear, "more likely to come from the depths below than the heights above; it seems superstitious to believe in either spirit or devil. But pray in what way were you backbiting me?"

"I was merely repeating to Hilary your eulogistic remarks upon him."

"And I beg to know wherefore I am called a Jesuit?"

Oliver's mischievous eyes sparkled with delight; he half turned to a side table whereon to deposit his hat and stick, and in so doing indulged in a joyous laugh.

"Upon my word, if you rank that order, as I do, among the most gifted and intellectual, you will acknowledge it a mark of the very high estimation in which I hold you."

Hilary said he had felt from the first how antagonistic all their ideas were, and most especially on this particular point. "Of the real nature of Jesuitism, you may depend upon it very little is actually known in this country; but as I am quite aware that you are talking of it now according to the popular notion, that it is the very essence of all subtlety and falsehood, there can be no question that such principles are utterly opposed to the spirit of Christianity, and destructive of all true holiness."

"Well, upon my word, I never heard a more intolerant tirade; I should have imagined that with all your Christian charity, you would have held it wrong to indulge in such free speaking. All Tractarians, Mr. S. Magna, aspire to be thought of superior sanctity, therefore they should consider slander as one of the seven deadly sins."

"I deny that we aspire to be thought any better than our neighbours; let each man's actions be the test of his assumption. However let that pass. I have yet to learn that an open condemnation of what is bad in itself, and likely to lead to increased evil, can be called slander."

"And yet do you know," insinuated Oliver, "that at times, when the actions of those of your own set have been reprobated by the adverse party, I have heard that part of the litany, which mentions enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, read as if what you have just asserted certainly came under one of those heads."

"If we are at all to understand each other, and argue to any purpose," said Hilary, "I think we had better define our terms and start fair."

"Oh, by all means," answered Oliver, with an air and manner of the utmost deference, as if he were really anxious to be informed upon the subject, only Ernest knew by watching the demure expression of his face that he was meditating mischief. "I always pin my faith to old Johnson," and he made a pivot of his chair in order to reach the book-shelves without rising.

"I wish," interposed Ernest rather irritably, "you would not be so dogmatical, Oliver, quite rude, in fact."

"My dear fellow, when I am trying my hardest to profit by the wisdom which falls in my path, who knows but Mr. S. Magna may have the honour of converting me? I may however premise, that

the High Church party, according to my view, which may be, nay, probably is, erroneous, appear very fond of power, expecting every one but themselves to submit, the doctrine of simple obedience being one of their pet themes. Now as you hold up this as the principal rule of life, you must by analogy admire the perfect discipline of the Jesuits. From the time a person joins their ranks he merges all individual action into the general rule of the order, giving up feeling and even thought in his own person to act in unity with his brethren. I call it a magnificent idea; and say what you like, I know you all admire it."

"Unity in the abstract is admirable," was Hilary's thoughtful answer; "who does not yearn for it? But there was no need of Loyola's league to enforce this. You speak of it as a new idea, emanating from and worked out by him. For the Church has from the beginning bound all her children by their baptismal vow to unity of action; if we are true to our profession, we shall not need to tolerate recognised evil for the sake of some grains of good; every baptized Christian is bound to act in unity with his fellows, without as a necessity becoming one of the order of Jesuits."

"Oh, the poor Jesuits," laughed Oliver; "the scape-goats of every sect, always a fair target for every shot. Only just start the subject anywhere, and witness the outburst that follows. Come, I will give you an account of an adventure I had with them," and he straightway ran into a ridiculous history of a mysterious Jesuit, who took him through a dark labyrinth and initiated him into all their secrets.

In spite of themselves, both his auditors were amused; for Oliver could throw a charm into any subject, however puerile, when he chose. Besides which, he mixed freely with all classes without

hesitation, and Ernest really thought he might have gained some information during his late foreign sojourn. But Oliver very soon saw that Hilary S. Magna was not a man to be deceived by a clap-trap story of this description, and becoming weary of the vain attempt to deceive and perplex him, he rose somewhat abruptly and took his leave.

CHAPTER VIII.

HEIDELBERG STUDIES.

"THAT was an amusing episode got up for our edification the other day, Oliver," said Ernest, the first time they were alone together after the foregoing recital; "a pity we cannot do you the honour of accepting it in perfect faith. Hilary is preparing an exordium for you, in which 'The Art of Gulling' will be somewhat severely handled."

Oliver lounged to the piano, where his fingers expressed a defiant contempt of any controlling power quite as forcibly as the choicest language could have done.

"Oliver," expostulated Ernest, "do come here and tell me when it was that you visited Rome, for I never heard of it before."

"Ah! my dear fellow, be thankful you know so little of my escapades and scrapes," observed his cousin, when he had sufficiently vented his irritation at the piano. "The advantages of this life are more nearly balanced than we casually suppose, and if one misses any particular blessing, depend upon it there is something in lieu thereof to make the scales even. We are accustomed to

pity your ill health and its consequences; for instance, your inability to join in the pursuits and pleasures enjoyed by others of your age and standing; but, Ernest, I would give my right hand to have lived as good a life, and to be as free from the world's slimy trail as yourself. One cannot touch pitch without being defiled; I know a pretty thick coating sticks to me. Oh! that Heidelberg was a grand mistake. Fool that I was in refusing to listen to advice! How I wish some one had insisted either on my not going at all, or upon my speedy return. However, these are useless regrets; I was headstrong, and so must pay the penalty; buy my experience, 'Which doth take dreadfully high wages, but she teacheth like none other,' as old Carlyle has it. Certes, there were plenty there to help a fellow to the commodity; he must have been either more or less than human who could have withstood all those lures; not but what I can see now, if I had been firm and never joined Gostenhofer's set, I should have avoided the worst of those horrid gambling debts, they are the millstone round my neck."

"By your own showing," said Ernest, "if you had adopted Hilary's motto, 'The nearest duty first,' you would have eluded much anxiety; it seems such a simple rule, and yet embraces so wide a field."

"I question very much if even the great saint himself would have had time to stop and weigh his actions among such a lot: not that I mean to excuse myself, I know that I have behaved infamously, and I thank God I have done with it all, now and for ever. Did Uncle Howard tell you all the trouble he has had in settling my affairs there?"

"Nay, you know well enough, however much my father may scold, he is little likely to bring your misdeeds prominently forward; he and Aunt Bay-

ley have been closeted much together of late, discussing your delinquencies and debts, but we have been told nothing. I thought though you were to return for a settling day?"

"Such was my original intention, but after I had made a clean breast of it, and told him without reservation all I owed, to whom, and in what way, I was too thoroughly driven into a corner not to be glad to cry *peccavi* and throw myself on his mercy. He decided I was too far gone in a bad set for that to be a safe course; so he agreed that old Dodson should go over and act for me. I tried hard to make my uncle sanction a little white lie in permitting old square toes to give out that illness was the cause of my sending a substitute, but he became ferocious, saying in that dry cold manner I so much dread, 'either my clerk acts under my directions or I throw your affairs back again into your own hands.'"

"Oliver!" exclaimed Ernest, "I wonder you did not sink into the ground in making such a proposition to my father; any sort of deception irritates him so much, that when we were all young there was nothing he punished so severely as the slightest deviation from truth; the exact truth he would always have. I have often heard him say Dr. Johnson was quite right, when he insisted that a child relating a circumstance as occurring at one window instead of another, should be corrected. I used to think it overstrained sometimes, but I am sure he was right, for many even tolerably good people, who would perhaps shrink from a lie, have no hesitation in acting so as to give a false impression."

"Well, I acknowledged the wisdom of his decision by making no further demur; the more so as I was, and am, very grateful to get out of the dilemma, *entre nous, mon cher*; if I had returned,

I know full well I should have got into a worse mess than ever. Those I lived with most were awful gamblers; one must float with the tide; I resisted as long as I could, in fact much longer than Uncle Howard would give me credit for, so that when I did yield they were all ready to pounce upon me like a pack of hungry wolves, in their wisdom deciding that being English I must have heaps of money to lose. It was thus after a night's debauch, when we had transgressed all bounds, and were within an ace of expulsion, that Gostenhofer and myself started at a moment's notice for Rome; a first-rate old fellow belonging to the university having hinted pretty plainly that we had better make ourselves scarce for a week or two. The crowd had not arrived for winter quarters, and if they had it would have made very little difference to us, for our headlong journey precluded the possibility of furnishing ourselves with introductory letters; so you see we were thrown upon our own resources for amusement. Gostenhofer did his best to get into a row with the pensionnaires of the Trinità, and I entertained myself as you have heard. Ah! I wish I was there now," continued Oliver closing his eyes as if to conjure up to his mind scenes that were fading from memory; but he soon burst forth again into very wakeful loquacity: "That window of yours at the 'Holy Angels' is a copy from the altar-piece at the Gesù, did you know it?"

"I thought every one was cognizant of that fact," said Ernest, "from the noise made about it, when it was first put in. I admire it more than words can tell; the painting must be very lovely."

"In grouping and design I consider the picture equals any one of the old masters. But I should like to know the history of yours; I mean how did it happen that particular subject was chosen?"

"There is I believe some slight mystery connected with it. The current story is that a lady, since dead, was, like yourself, irresistibly attracted by the picture, and wishing to present the east window to our beautiful church as a memorial offering, obtained a copy from the artist; it is a modern production, the work of a Cavaliere Capalti."

"Ah, yes, so it is, I saw all the rough sketches in his studio; he told me the conception of it very nearly cost him a brain fever, for he knew this order, when he was lucky enough to get it, would be the turning point in his career, either stamping him as an artist or condemning him to hopeless despair. The idea which he hoped to work out was, that at the moment when the Virgin Mother presented her Holy Child in the temple, a fleeting vision of what His life on earth would be was vouchsafed her, and also a glimpse of His eternal glory. In the centre is the Cross prominent, and emanating from the rays of light at the back of the transverse beam, rise a host of Angels two and two, diminishing perspectively in a semi-circle, the last cherub heads merging in the clouds beyond. The great effect consists in the variety of celestial faces, all perfectly lovely, yet each one differing from the other in beauty. The foreground at the foot of the Cross represents of course the group in the temple. The venerable Simeon, the Holy Infant, Joseph and Saint Mary the Virgin, whose expression of gentle love and attitude of trusting resignation is the crowning perfection of the whole. One may remember but can never describe it, and that is just the point where your east window is a dead failure; the drapery and the colouring are all one can desire, but the graceful pose and dignity of that beautiful face are sadly wanting. Often and often before my wan-

derings I went with you solely to gaze on that stained glass, enchanted by its perfection, but never understanding the subject. Is it truly the work of only an amateur?"

"Hardly that," said Ernest; "it was executed under the direction and superintendence of a gentleman who is a great proficient in the art, I forget his name, but Mary will tell you, she is our authority concerning all that relates to our church."

Oliver remained silent for some time; at length he said, "I have scarcely spoken to her since my return, it almost seems as if she avoided me now," he set his teeth hard as he added, "illustrating the old proverb, 'Times change and we change with them.'"

Ernest looked up surprised at his altered tone, for which he could assign no reason, and seeing that Oliver was secretly chafing under his own thoughts took no notice. He was so accustomed to his cousin's eccentric outbreaks when excited or opposed, that he expected him to resume the conversation when his imaginary battle should be fought or when his inclination prompted him; he therefore leant back in his chair, glad of a little rest, for he was feeling unusually weak and languid.

Oliver sat for some time impatiently tapping his boot or drumming with his fingers on the table, bursting forth finally with startling impetuosity,

"There is a limit to all human endurance, and mine has reached the verge, I cannot exist thus; S. Lawrence on his gridiron reposed on a bed of rose-leaves in comparison with the torture I have experienced since Kate's wedding day. The truth I must know, and I would rather appeal to you in the first instance to relieve this gnawing anxiety. In pity then be to me as you were in the old time, before other influence had usurped the place I

once held in your heart. Ernest, you must have all your life felt that there is but one in whom all my being is concentrated! You must know who has ever been the idol of my affections, the one object of my aspiration. It is not jealousy that prompts my speaking now; for I would scorn even the thought of it, but I intreat you tell me, is there any engagement, any love-making going on between Mary and that self-sufficient priest, who arrogates to himself all the affection of this house?"

There was much in this speech to annoy Ernest, who, as has been observed, was uncontrollably irritable at times, partly from disease, partly from temperament; first an imputation of fickleness on his part, a charge he, so perfectly sincere, would naturally resent: then the conclusion was one of those sneering attacks upon Hilary, which ever set his loyal affection in a blaze. In retaliation, he most unmercifully determined to strike home, not sparing his cousin where he knew him to be most vulnerable, purposely rendering his tone and manner equally vexing as he answered,

"Supposing, perhaps only for argument's sake, we assume such to be the case, I do not see the necessity of her cousin's interference."

He thus skilfully acknowledged only the relationship, and ignored the closer tie which Oliver contemplated establishing.

Oliver's face grew livid, as though he had received a sudden blow. "It is then as I suspected! It shall go hard but I will foil that false priest yet! He to dare to presume to Mary! he to snatch her from my grasp! never! From a boy I have reckoned on this my one desired prize, the angel that was to turn my heart to all things good and pure. I allowed the fair bud to expand, that I might eventually possess the lovely flowers with

greater certainty, treasuring up every thought and feeling until the right moment came to lay at her feet my life-long devotion. And now to be balked, to be thwarted at the climax I have so watched and panted for! Never! It shall not be; the cup of my happiness shall not be thrust aside untasted by the hand of that proud Irishman; I vow it! From the first moment we met I felt within me the antagonism which intimacy has but increased. I knew we were to be pitted against each other. But Mary he shall not have!"

Ernest looked on frightened and distressed at the storm he had so thoughtlessly raised. Delicate and suffering, he was quite unfit to encounter such ungovernable fits of passion; in haste he tried to do away with the false impression his temper had so rashly caused him to inflict.

"Oliver, you are judging erroneously; it is my fault; I was greatly to blame in giving you this impression: there is no engagement between them, nay, I can add more, and say there never will be, only calm yourself and I will tell you all the truth, but pray be less violent, I am so sorry," and he sunk back pale, exhausted and powerless.

Oliver becoming alarmed in his turn flew to his side with every endearing expression, trying to soothe the excitement he knew the other could so ill bear, bathing his forehead with cooling waters, administering medicinal drops, holding salts to his nostrils, and opening the window that the soft pure air might revive him, heartily ashamed so to have transgressed in an invalid's presence. Ernest by degrees recovered, the faintness passed off, and the frightful palpitation gradually subsided, but it was long, very long, before his flushed cheek resumed its natural colour, or his unnaturally rapid pulse was lowered.

Then he insisted upon renewing their conver-

sation ; in vain Oliver begged it might drop, beseeching him to try and forget it altogether ; but Ernest persisted, perhaps as an atonement for the indulgence of his besetting infirmity, assuring his cousin there was no private understanding between Mary and Hilary, that thus much he could aver, but that further, closer particulars he was not at liberty to reveal, and ending by expressing his opinion that Oliver had better let the matter rest in abeyance, at least for a time, as although she was not engaged to Hilary, he could not see by what stretch of logic that circumstance would better Oliver's chance.

"Do you mean then to infer Mary could never be induced to listen to my suit?"

"Most men can judge somewhat of a lady's mind. Have you any reason to entertain an idea of her preference?"

"I cannot tell," answered Oliver, "our intercourse is so different to that of strangers, I would not for worlds subject myself to a denial, it would be the death of me. If it were not for Hilary S. Magna's interference all would be well ; since he came among us everything has changed. I will see him myself, and wrench forth replies to my questions."

He was beginning again ranting demonstratively, when Ernest held up his hand deprecatingly, showing by the action, how little he could bear this trial on his nerves. Oliver subsided after one or two impatient words, exercising the most unusual self-control in calmly talking over the whole affair, Ernest seizing the first chance of expostulating upon his cousin's contemptuous bearing towards his friend. A proud haughty satirical smile curled the other's lip, giving to his handsome face the expression of a fallen angel, as he answered,

"He is one of those who unconsciously remind

us of the smooth and fair, fair and false school, shirking all disagreeables from himself to his friends, expecting them to tilt in his behalf. I hate the whole class of sing-song, May-pole idlers."

Ernest laughed.

"Your sneer betrays the latent jealousy of his handsome person which I was sure existed."

"Nay, you are entirely deceived," said Oliver, "I have no admiration for walking lamp-posts. Evil weeds grow apace."

"Yes, and good rye grows high. But we are forgetting ourselves in a strife of tongues; you worry me at times more than I can bear, for it grieves me so to wrangle with you; only this much I must say, and then we will have done with the subject. To carp and cavil at the clergy is absolutely wrong; in virtue of their office we should regard them with all love and respect; their duty is in some sort the same as was S. John Baptist's; they are God's messengers, and I think if we remembered this we should speak, nay, even think of them in a spirit of far greater charity than I fear many do. I am not referring now entirely to Hilary, I mean all the clergy of the Church throughout the world."

Oliver stretched out his hand.

"Dear Ernest, forgive my violence, I am ashamed of having tried you so, besides, I do not always mean exactly what I say."

It was strange how the vain opinionative young man always succumbed, and oftentimes confessed himself wrong, to the slight delicate humble-minded youth, never admitting to others the possibility of error on his part; a word from Ernest would often effect more than an hour's interview with any one else. However, on this particular occasion he was seriously disturbed; the subject

pressed home too closely to be easily passed off, therefore finding it impossible to refrain from expressing his thoughts, he began to do so in a much more quiet way.

"I can't bear him, and that is the truth ; it frets me beyond measure to see him take all my rudeness as gently and politely as though he accepted my pretended admiration and compliments to his superiority ; if I could but put him out of temper or only see him ruffled, it would act like a safety-valve, but no, nothing disturbs his bland easy elegance."

"Well, I warn you for the future," said Ernest. "I shall not sit by quietly and countenance your impertinence."

Oliver made an odd grimace.

"I suppose I must try to be more civil, but it goes sadly against the grain," and he heaved a deep sigh as one does in contemplating a distasteful task.

"There can be but one explanation for your determined opposition to one who is so very good," said Ernest.

"I would give much to know if he really believes all he preaches so plausibly ; he is one of the highest of High Churchmen, and I cannot help thinking, will topple over as many have done before him. Don't look so pained, I cannot choose but be candid when we are alone together ; I wonder by the way, what is the potent spell you exercise to make me like plastic wax in your hands ; I have often thought of this magic you wield over me, a power possessed by none other, but philosophy as I may, it remains a mystery still."

Poor Oliver was always losing himself in a cloud of metaphysical speculations, always accounting for every difficulty in his path by the most out-of-the-way suppositions, instead of accepting the

plain solution close at hand; raising elaborate edifices of mental contemplation, which were ever shivered to atoms by one word of simple truth, uttered perhaps casually almost always by some one with far less pretension to ability and cleverness than himself, it would penetrate like a ray of light his clouded overwrought mind, its pure presence scattering into space the host of gathering phantom forms, which bid fair, but for some such check seriously to disturb its equilibrium. It was solely because he sought to work the problem by philosophy only that it eluded his perception, for straightforward honest truth ever bears with it weight and force. Let a person clearly express an honest conviction, showing by their whole manner that it is so, and none need wonder at the mighty influence it will have over wandering weaker minds, who are ever shifting with every breath of the world's opinion, having no anchor on the rock of faith.

"Still," went on Oliver, "down in my inmost heart there is a voice pleading in his favour, but that is only in so far as it relates to his devoted love to you, I never felt so undecided about any one in my life before."

"Then why not believe him to be all your better judgment tells you. If you would lay aside that combative manner and talk to him, listening to his arguments, and humbly seeking the truth, how much happier you would be. I know you entertain very lax ideas concerning the Faith, and I greatly fear your German studies have but widened the breach, but be advised in time. Oliver, as boys we knelt together in prayer, and by all those dear associations and remembrances, let me prevail with you, and have the comfort of feeling you are no longer a wanderer from the true fold."

"And if I do, that is, if I try to become all you consider so desirable, do you think it would influence Mary, I mean, can you say, there is hope that in time she will care for me?"

"How is it possible that on such a subject I can answer for my sister? Of this I am sure, if you only think of religion to gain her good will, and not for the honour and glory of God, you will be farther from your object than ever."

As he spoke they both turned hastily as the door opened, and Mary stood on the threshold, but she gave no sign of having heard any part of their discourse.

"I thought you were alone, Ernest," she said, shaking hands with Oliver at the same time, "and so I came to sit with you; our mother is gone to her own room, she has a terrible head-ache, and judged rest and perfect quiet the best remedy. I on the contrary have quarrelled with solitude to-day, and so came to inflict myself upon you."

While she spoke, Oliver had busied himself for her comfort, placing her work-basket on the table, offering a chair, diving into a dark corner for a hassock, in short, becoming suddenly active to hide the confusion he would not willingly have owned, finally possessing himself of the accordion, and playing a few bars to restore his equanimity. Mary with her usual observation, saw at once there had been some sort of a scene, and therefore began talking to cover any lingering awkwardness.

"I am so tired, for I have been helping French to pack darling Kate's books, and what do you think dropped out of one of them?"

They both looked obligingly curious.

"A list of our favourite chapters, those we used to select when we were allowed to choose what we should read aloud on a Sunday evening."

Ernest and Oliver exchanged glances at this al-

lusion to their early habits and companionship, following so close upon their conversation.

"One thing was quite certain," said Oliver, "if you, Mary, had a voice in it, Esther was sure to be the subject, until I for one became wearied of the charms of the beautiful Jewess."

"Did you always read the Old Testament?" said Hilary, who had entered a moment before, and now drew in his chair.

"You do not quite understand," said Ernest; "this reading was a sort of treat. If we had all been good and given satisfaction during the day, we were allowed to have the large family Bible with illustrations, and choose a chapter by turns, reading aloud, my mother or Aunt Bayley explaining the print; for the latter always dined here on Sundays, and as Oliver justly observes, Mary had rather a tiresome predilection in favour of the celebrated eastern queen, the great benefactor of her race."

"Oh," said Mary, "I had, and perhaps still have very mixed feelings concerning her. I admired her intensely, partly from her extreme goodness, and partly from her consummate address in managing Ahasuerus, who was certainly a great tyrant; but then I always felt so exceedingly sorry for poor queen Vashti, whose place she usurped."

"Did it never strike you," said Oliver, with a grandiloquent philosophizing air, "that Vashti and our own queen Catherine of Aragon, might be ranked together by similarity of position? Both were dignified, noble women, and both were cast down from their high estate to make way for a younger and fairer rival."

Be it known he had never thought upon the subject, but the idea presenting itself he enlarged upon it, on the spur of the moment, according to his undeviating custom, arrogating to himself depth

of thought and most careful reading, most foreign to his versatile character.

"You are exhibiting most unpardonable ignorance," answered Mary; "for queen Vashti's great beauty is particularly mentioned, 'and she was fair to look upon.'"

Oliver contradicted, vexed that she should observe his superficial line of argument. "Such," he said, "had never been his impression, she must be confusing sacred and profane history."

Ernest appealed to Hilary to set them right, but Oliver preferred plunging deeper in the mire of ignorance, rather than give the latter a chance of exaltation at his expense; so stretching out his arm for his cousin's little Bible, he prepared to consult the fountain head; however it did not appear that he was very conversant with its pages, for he turned over the leaves backwards and forwards in a most bewildered fashion, asking at length where Esther came. Hilary leant forward, merely touching the book with the points of his fingers, it seemed to fall open at the place. Having satisfied himself upon the score of the deposed queen's beauty, Oliver declared he perfectly remembered, now that the history was before him, how he used to despise Esther's cowardice in not pleading for her people; and that when she was urged on by Mordecai, she did so in a state bordering on despair, and not much like a heroine.

Mary vindicated her favourite, saying she used to be in an agony for her, when she ventured into the interior of the palace without special permission.

Oliver triumphantly accepted this as leaning to his view of the case. "Exactly," he said, "you thought she was rashly seeking her own destruction."

"No," interposed Hilary, "not so; the interest

at stake was the welfare of all her nation, it was made known to her that her duty demanded that bold step, and she set about her work in a spirit of obedience and trust."

"At all events," said Oliver, "it was tempting the lion's jaws, only luckily he did not show his teeth."

Hilary looked grave, refusing to sit by and hear Scripture discussed in that light way. "We may be sure," he said, "if a work is to be done, and we set about it honestly and heartily, putting our whole trust and confidence in God, we shall have as much assistance as is necessary for the moment, a supply of grace to carry us forward for the time being; we must exercise our faith in trusting for the rest. As a case in point, I would instance Josiah, the good king of Judah, who succeeded to the throne when the kingdom was sunk in sin and apathy. Reform was especially needed, and he began by rooting out idolatry from the land: having succeeded to a certain point, he next undertook to restore the temple. Now mark, he hardly knew what was right, so great was the confusion consequent upon individual and national wickedness; there was no written guide, for it had been lost long before, but he resolutely did the best he could."

"In fact," interrupted Ernest, "he took the nearest duty first."

Hilary acknowledged the remark by one of those rare sweet smiles, which ever went straight to the heart.

"And his reward exceeded his most sanguine expectations; for the workmen employed accidentally discovered the book of the law, very probably the original one from the ark. It was then he held his celebrated passover."

"Ah," said Oliver, who had been skimming the

history, "and when we might anticipate for him rest and enjoyment he died, leaving others to reap the fruit of his labours."

"Leaving to others the evils to come. His early death was a reward for his holy life."

"Then how shall we judge of the ALMIGHTY's dealings with the faithful?" said Oliver.

"We may not presume to judge at all of God's dealings with man; neither are we to look for a reward on earth. This very Josiah, the best king of Judah, received his death wound on the battle field, as did Ahab, the worst king of Israel, so little can we in our finite comprehension understand the wisdom of the Infinite. Let us remember WHO said, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'"

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

Two ladies were seated in the large elegantly furnished drawing-room of a handsome country house, the windows were hung with heavy damask curtains, the floor was covered with one of those thick, long-piled carpets, wherein the feet sink as when one treads upon a bed of moss; glasses and mirrors reflected richly inlaid tables, quaintly carved chairs and luxurious silken couches; oil paintings of great value adorned the walls, bouquets were placed in every variety of vase, flower-stands in the windows, books and pamphlets scattered plentifully around; all that wealth and taste combined could produce to gratify caprice seemed at command, yet strange,

with all these accessories there lacked that appearance of home comfort and pleasant occupation so winning to all English hearts.

Mother and daughter were in close and apparently not very amicable conversation, the first looking angry and very much vexed, the other obstinate and defiant. The mother was speaking.

"You must allow me to be the best judge, Euphine, as lookers on always are. I am sure you are provoking him beyond his powers of endurance. He is trying, I grant, but in his delicate weak state it is not likely he will live long; soon you may have everything in your own hands, so that after all it is but exercising a little patience, whereas on the other hand, we never know the influence of mind over matter, if you stretch the point and oppose him just too far, thus inducing an attack of real insanity, he may live on for years, sometimes better and at home, sometimes worse and in an asylum; therefore reflect while you have the power, if it is not wiser to give in to all his harmless little foibles and pet him as you would a spoilt child. The first few months of your marriage were comparatively smooth and pleasant, why not be kind to him now as you were then, and as a consequence enjoy the same comfort?"

"It is very easy for you to talk, mamma, who have not the worry of living continuously, day after day, with such an idiot."

"Hush!" quickly interposed the mother, casting a furtive glance at the door: "how can you speak so loud, knowing his propensity to watch and listen, always on the qui-vive to hear what is said about himself; you exercise neither judgment nor discretion in speaking out unpleasant truths in that violent way. I admit he is very tiresome, but remember, if it had not been for him, you and I should now be all but starving on a bare pittance.

The alternative of counting over every shilling before expending it you thought far worse than the penalty which you knew must be paid for wealth when you married, for his infirmities were sufficiently obvious; so you should try and make the best of it altogether, weighing the rough with the smooth. Around you is everything money can obtain, carriages at your command, servants to attend on you, dresses and jewels in abundance. What more could woman in her senses wish for? The only drawback being—

“A fool for a husband,” broke in her daughter petulantly.

“Euphine, you enrage me. Will you never learn wisdom, girl? There must always be some balance in this world. You certainly are very ungrateful to behave in this way to me. We talked the whole thing over times enough in our dark little parlour, and you made light of all difficulties then. The cry of your heart was for wealth; give me riches and I shall be content: and let me add, you were much wiser then than now. Money is power, let who will gainsay it, as you will find in time, a power few will dispute. I knew sufficiently well what I was about, and you should thank me principally that this fortune is secured to you; for I tried hard to place you here, to give you position and wealth, and having achieved this with almost superhuman efforts and no small degree of skill, and now that you have nothing to do but enjoy it, you turn with the possession to satiety, saying, I would rather it had been aught else.”

“That is a true saying, mamma,” said Euphine, “no one knows where the shoe pinches but he who wears it.’ It is so easy to preach, so much the reverse to practise. You only come down here occasionally, enjoying all the material good things for which I pay so heavy a price; but you have

not to pass the weary days with him alone, thrown entirely on my own resources for relieving their tedium : as we cannot have society or people staying in the house, nor can I mix in the county gaieties, at least not without being pointed at, therefore I prefer remaining at home."

She was interrupted by her mother's eager gesture for silence. They heard a slight sound without, the door opened, and in walked Christopher Huntley, Esquire, the husband of Euphine, whose marriage Mrs. Charles Howard had announced to her sister-in-law with so much triumph. He was tall and excessively thin, his legs so attenuated as to seem unable to support the very slight body they carried. He was about twenty-five, but looked much younger, only a mere boy in fact, his fair curly hair and delicate white skin, wherein might be traced every vein, assisting the delusion : he had pale blue eyes, and good features, but round his mouth there wandered that feeble uncertain smile which always denotes some degree of imbecility, his receding forehead marking too plainly some deficiency of intellect. He was a victim to those distressing fits which sap and destroy the mind much quicker than the body.

Before closing the door he glanced suspiciously round the room, his eye resting not very amicably upon the portly person of his mother-in-law.

"Ah, Mrs. Silverton," he said advancing, "I thought I heard you here gossiping with Euphine, mammas have always advice to give."

The good lady never knew exactly how to answer him, always feeling painfully ill at ease in his presence. She, like most persons, had an incipient dread of insanity ; she knew him to be cunning and suspicious in the extreme, therefore while trying to seem perfectly open and candid, and at the same time nervously dreading to excite

his irritable temperament, she often found herself uncomfortably at a loss.

"Very true, as you say, Mr. Huntley," she answered, putting on an injured air, "mothers have an arduous task when they offer unpalatable advice."

"Euphy does not like that sort of thing, she always wants her own way. But you don't know what Kisty has been doing," he continued, turning to his wife.

Like all weak-minded persons, he invariably spoke of himself in the third person.

"You know I never like you to do anything unusual without me. Surely," she added quickly, "you have not been grooming your horse again," and she looked into the palms of his hand, as you would open that of a little child to see if they were clean.

"Kisty has had such a treat," he said, speaking with all the zest of recent enjoyment. "All the red and yellow tongues leaped up and crackled, and hissed, and would have curled up and down, and in and out, only old Bradley came pouring the horrid cold water over them, and sent me away, so I came to tell you, but he must not scold Kisty, must he?"

"Naughty Kisty must not play with fire," and his wife very spitefully rapped his thread-like fingers with a heavy malachite paper-cutter which lay on the table.

His temper was roused either by opposition or pain, for he stamped and roared furiously, rushing to the long French window, which he opened with marvellous rapidity, striding on to the lawn, gesticulating violently. Either passion so extreme was exceedingly shortlived, or as was most likely from his wayward temperament, some object upon which his eye rested, diverted the current of thought into a totally different channel, for all

trace of ill-temper had passed from his countenance, as he bounded back into the room, exultingly questioning Euphine about the gold and silver fish.

"Are they gone again?" she asked.

"Yes, yes," he cried, gleefully clapping his hands. "All gone; the fountain empty. All gone. Kisty knows; Kisty knows."

"Tell me then," she said, "what becomes of them?"

"No, no; Kisty knows," and he walked away triumphantly, notwithstanding her reiterated desire to hear all he could tell upon the subject.

Euphine could hardly help smiling at his self-important air, despite her annoyance; she had over and over again replenished the fountains in the grounds with those ornamental little fish, but they always disappeared, sometimes within the space of four-and-twenty hours, sometimes after two or three days; her first idea had been that they were stolen, but subsequent inquiries had convinced her such was not the case, yet the clear sparkling limpid waters were always divested of these additional attractions, much to her mystification, Kisty constantly declaring he was in possession of the secret, but whether he was cunningly amusing himself at her expense, or whether his assertion was correct, she had no means of ascertaining. Whenever the subject was mentioned, he invariably assumed an air of most ludicrous importance, asseverating that he knew all about it, but no inducements, however blandly tempting, could prevail upon him to disclose the mystery. Thus he walked off now, pluming himself upon the information, whether real or imaginary.

Euphine, baffled as usual when it came to questioning him directly upon any point, turned her attention to Mr. Bradley, his attendant, whom she

had summoned upon Kisty's first appearance, harshly desiring her mother when she did so to retire for the time to the library. She now stood beating the hearth-rug with her foot until he entered, but never once took her eyes from the figure of her husband.

"What has Mr. Huntley been doing to excite him?" she asked angrily, "surely you might have contrived to prevent my being interrupted just now."

Mr. Bradley was very sorry she should have been disturbed. The accident was out of his power to control; he was sealing a packet to go by rail, and before he was aware of it, Mr. Huntley had turned over the lighted candle upon his pocket-handkerchief, the thin cambric blazing up at once, he had caught it by the corner, flinging it into the waste paper basket. He had put it out as quickly as possible, but unfortunately there was a great deal of silver paper. No harm had been done, but Mr. Huntley had become quite restive on seeing the flame shoot up at every fresh effort to extinguish it.

"Well, well," she broke in impatiently, "I know you are not in fault, but pray amuse him in some way that will keep him at a distance from me this morning; this catastrophe will unstring his nerves again; the worst possible thing for him, but I cannot undergo the fatigue of his presence."

Mr. Bradley had been appointed expressly to take charge of the master of the house, and when he first came, before Christopher's increasing malady had manifested itself, it had been rather a pleasant pastime than otherwise, but now that he was becoming more unmanageable, and Euphine proportionately unsettled, the post bid fair to prove no sinecure.

He merely bowed in answer to Mrs. Huntley's

irritable request, observing, her husband was never so happy as in her presence, a compliment she appeared little to appreciate, as she shortly asked, if he could not be persuaded to take a long ride; it would distract his attention; from certain symptoms, she feared he might be on the eve of an attack which nothing but the most indulgent soothing would ward off. She passed him hastily as she spoke, and crossing the vestibule, called out, "Come back now, mamma, he is going out, and I hope will not return for hours. He is worse than usual to-day," she added, when they had resumed their seats. "Last night he had one of those dreadful fits; I awoke about two this morning, finding him lying on his back, his eyes unnaturally wide open, staring at the ceiling, the perspiration pouring from him: I raised his head immediately, almost frightened to death, and after a violent struggle and most obstinate resistance, had him conveyed to Mr. Bradley's apartments. I wonder I am not prostrate from sheer fatigue of body and mind, mamma, and yet you urge me to try and make the best of it, as if there was any best to such a state of things, and to pet him and coax him on the chance of its making him better. Then there is that dreadful propensity to play with fire. We are never safe. We shall all be roasted alive some night I know. One day in the summer he set light to the lace curtains in my morning room, and as they blazed up curling in the breeze, and communicating the flames to other things around, he lay on the sofa kicking his heels in the air, shouting with laughter, his eyes starting out of his head, shrieking at the top of his voice, 'glorious, glorious light.' I live in constant dread, lest he should by any chance find a lucifer match; we are obliged to keep them under lock and key, and the servants all know they would be dismissed

if one were left about ; he is more ingenious at discovering where they are hid than any one could imagine. It is so tedious to drag on day after day watching, and anxious lest flames should burst out at any corner. Why even that day I have alluded to, he had hardly been left five minutes alone, and how he procured a light, is still a mystery. If I only answer a note I am obliged to ring for a taper, and see it taken away instantly."

"My dear Euphine," responded her mother, in a somewhat alarmed tone, "I had no idea it had come to this ; but I think you must have roused him by needless opposition. I should never have imagined his peculiarities would have expanded into a real disease of the brain, as by your account seems likely. I was very careful, I am sure, not to sacrifice you for money, as I went to the expense of Suthermann's opinion (and in those days every guinea was of treble worth), who assured me it was only when attacks were hanging over him, or when thwarted, that he would be at all restive."

"Well, mamma, you cannot expect me to be a complete slave ; he would tire the patience of a second Job. Just then, I do remember, I had taken a fancy to riding, you know I always was fond of it, only we could never afford a horse. Christopher particularly dislikes seeing a lady on horseback, which is very silly, as riding does him more good than anything else, he is constantly scouring the country ; not but what I am thankful to get rid of him, it does give me a few hours' rest by myself, or I am sure I do not know what would become of me. One good thing is, that Mr. Bradley is quite to be trusted, and I believe the recreation, such as it is, is essential to prevent his going out of his mind too, poor man."

"Now that you mention him, Euphine, I should

be glad to know who he is, and how long he has been domesticated here?"

"As to his identity, mamma, you had better make inquiries, I have never taken the trouble to do so. He has had the education of a gentleman, and always behaves as one; poor he must be, or he would not undertake his present charge. He was placed with us by the Huntley family about six months ago, after Christopher's very bad fit, which lasted more than three days; he is called a trustee. He was found out and engaged by Robert Huntley, the next heir, and considers five hundred a year an equivalent for his life of slavery."

"And very good pay too, for living in first-rate style and having a horse at command," rejoined the old lady.

"Well, you may think so, who only look on, but I would not undertake such a wearisome responsibility for twice the sum. But to return to our conversation, which will not be interrupted. I must have change. I must have a month of London gaiety without worry, so remember, mamma, you must take your lead from me, and play into my hands at dinner in order to bring it to pass. I shall let him," and she indicated her husband by a backward toss of her head, "have plenty of sweetmeats, and give him the prettiest bonbons, and so try to win him over; but there is no saying, he is so changeable, and yet surely," she added contemptuously, "if I do but take the trouble I can manage a fool!"

Either she was too self-confident, or he was less imbecile, than in her scorn of his weakness she chose to consider, for he came home from his ride in excellent spirits, all trace of the morning storm having disappeared. Euphine, thinking his good humour would second her desires, did all she could to encourage the propitious change, flattering his

vanity by her unusual attentions, listening to the exultant account of his afternoon equestrian feats, and of his superiority over Bradley, kissing him fondly, promising her darling boy all sorts of enjoyments.

They had dined, and were sitting at dessert, when Mr. Bradley begged permission to retire to his own apartment, Euphine bowing consent; this was a little scene invariably acted after dinner between them. Now was the moment for the concerted attack.

"Darling Kisty," began his wife, helping him largely to preserved ginger, a dainty he always coveted, "what should you say if mamma wanted to run away with Euphy?"

"What for?" was all he could enunciate, his masticating powers being at the moment in active operation.

"Oh, you know, love, I was her daughter before I became your wife, so she naturally wants a little of my company."

"But she was very willing to give you up to me when she used to call me that sweet Mr. Huntley, and told me she should like me to marry you and take you to my beautiful home."

"Of course, Kisty, dear, every one would have liked to marry you, but sometimes one wants variety. Consider also there are lots of pretty things I shall buy in London."

"London!" he exclaimed; "I used to like London, the shops, and park, and theatres; yes, surely we will come, Mrs. Silverton. Shall we start to-morrow?"

"No, not so soon, dear," answered his wife; "but you know you like the country so much better, I was thinking of going with mamma for a few days, I could buy heaps of pretty things and bring them to you here."

"No, no," he said, with lowering brow and pouting lips, contradiction bringing into full play all the worst points of his face; "I will go," and he dashed a wine glass on the table to atoms.

She tried to soothe him, looking across angrily at her mother for assistance, who however unwillingly, felt obliged to respond.

"My dear Mr. Huntley," she began, in her blindest tone, "you forget I am a poor widow with only a small establishment, although nothing would give me so much pleasure as entertaining you in my home; still, accustomed as you are to great luxury, many things necessary to your comfort would be wanting, and therefore much as it grieves me to refuse, I fear it will be out of my power to receive you."

"Kisty hates old women, they are always disagreeable," was his not very polite rejoinder, accompanied by an ugly grimace.

"But if my dear Mr. Huntley would consent to Euphine's coming alone with me for only a few days."

"No, no, no," he cried, each negative rising in vehemence, violently striking the table, "no, no, I will not be left alone," and his face became purple with passion.

His wife saw at once further persuasion was useless, that even now in their eagerness they had urged him beyond endurance, therefore she made a signal for her mother to leave them alone. That lady, being only too happy to escape, complied immediately, making her way to the drawing-room. Poor lady, she was beginning to think perhaps poverty without so much mental anxiety might have been preferable.

When she first met her son-in-law at a large party in town during the season, where he was

particularly struck with her daughter's handsome face and figure, he was far from being as afflicted as he was now; that he was delicate she could see, and half an hour's conversation would have convinced any one of his want of intellect, but this she chose to ignore, speaking of it to Euphine and in her own circle as mere eccentricity. He was acknowledged rich, and wealth was what they sought, so when it came to a declaration the younger lady, nothing loth, accepted him, and having obtained the object for which both were willing to barter all other considerations, surely it was inconsistent to complain now that the price must be paid. Yet the grievance of the moment ever seems the hardest to endure. Wealth in possession sunk in value. She could not overlook the fact that his malady was increasing, by mismanagement and ill-temper she did not in the least doubt, but all the same alarmingly growing upon him. Euphine too was becoming harsh and inconsiderate to those around, allowing herself to feel, and showing that she felt her husband, a grievous incumbrance, and very much in the way of her enjoyment.

Mrs. Silvertown saw no clear course before her except to take a medical opinion. She at once made up her mind to urge a consultation by every possible argument, for in her weak nervousness she scarcely dared contemplate the limits of his madness.

That she had been a principal agent in bringing her daughter to the existing miserable state of things was true, still she was not utterly selfish, for she sat alone upwards of an hour casting about in vain compunction for some remedy, watching and waiting, wretched and hopeless, until at length quite late a servant came to beg she would retire, as Mrs. Huntley found it impossible to leave her husband. There had ensued a terrible scene after

he got to his room, and it was only by promises and coaxing he had been induced to go to bed, even then retaining his wife's hand until he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER X.

THE RESULT OF SUCCESS.

THE vigorous fresh elasticity of a new day found Mrs. Silverton with little additional comfort. She was seated before a breakfast table, spread with dainties and fruits of every description, invitingly tempting in the bright sparkling silver and glass, reflecting prismatic colours in the rays of light which danced so pleasantly through the open windows. But the extraneous cheerfulness was little responded to by her appearance which seemed one of the greatest discomfort, now moving restlessly about first at one place then in another, drawing up her chair resolutely, as if about to begin upon some one of the delicate morsels within reach, an after thought however, causing her to relinquish the idea, although feeling quite faint for want of her morning meal.

The sun was getting higher and higher, his bright gleams lighting up fountain, lawn, and flowers, the air resounded with the joyous songs of the sweet feathered tribe, trilling gloriously their universal hymn of praise, but the old lady's mind was far from being attuned to harmony, just now less than ever, she was listening far more attentively to the peals of the little French bracket clock, as it merrily rung out the quarters, each lagging longer and further apart. Her patience

was well-nigh exhausted, when the appearance of the post-bag caused a slight diversion, but alas, only adding insult to injury, as she suddenly remembered the distribution of its contents belonged to no one but Mr. Huntley, a point he insisted upon with an obstinacy peculiar to his malady.

Now the daily paper was the good lady's great enjoyment, and if supplied with that, it is questionable whether the absence of tea and coffee would have been any great deprivation, but her favourite resource within reach, and yet unavailable, was indeed a climax of ill-usage. She fixed her eyes longingly upon the dark object as it lay on the snowy table-cloth, the contemplation increasing her irritability, until hearing her daughter's approach, heralded by no gentle voice she judged it expedient to smoothe her brow, and greet her as amiably as circumstances would permit.

"Good morning, my love," she began, her tone more bland than her countenance, "I did not retire for some time after I received your message last night, hoping still to be of use to you. How late was it when you managed to get free? Did you rest at all, but you look ill and worn?"

"Ill! Do you suppose I have the nerves of an elephant?" was the ungracious rejoinder, "these scenes will kill me outright."

"They are sadly wearying," said her mother commiseratingly, "but come now, make a good breakfast, that will do you good. When persons are undergoing great fatigue they require generous nourishment; I know that from experience; taking plenty of support was the only thing that kept me up when your poor father had that dreadful illness, after he broke his collar bone; you must remember it, Euphine; you were then at school, you know."

Euphine tossed her head impatiently, exclaim-

ing against the solace afforded by creature-comforts. Mrs. Silverton's temper had been tolerably tried, and was pretty well exhausted in her several attempts at amiability, so she answered rather tartly that, however much she could afford to despise them now, it had not always been so, considering how fretfully she bore the want of them a year ago, "and think a moment," she continued, "if it was not for the indulgence of these same animal comforts you consented to the burden of your present charge."

"Whatever may have been my object in taking it up," answered Euphine, "it is likely to prove a heavy one without the additional weights of censure."

"And you will not make it lighter," said her mother, "without clear directions for your guidance from those who have studied the subject, and are competent to give an opinion. I lay awake half the night, trying to think of some alleviation for you, and this is the result of my cogitations. It seems to me inconceivable that you should not long ago have had first-rate advice."

"Do you suppose I should grope on in the dark like this without it? No; whatsoever assistance money can give I will have. I have written a volume to both Suthermann and Reston-Crowe. From the former I have had an answer; he remembers your consultation with him, and can offer no further help; but his opinion is nothing worth, as he declares it is all in my own hands. 'If I am sensible enough not to thwart him all will go smooth.'

"Yes; actually that is his most fatuous remark. 'If you have tact enough to give in.' I should like to force on him a week's residence here, and see how far his complaisance would stand the test, if he would yield up every point to a weak sense-

less opposition. No, indeed; I did not marry to become mere nurse to a driveller. But mercifully he is not the only oracle; in fact, I cannot think why I have had no reply from the other. I enclosed a pretty round sum to insure attention, and have taken no notice of Suthermann's letter, because I shall be guided by whichever I deem best worth consideration. Ah! there is the post-bag," she exclaimed, as her eye caught sight of it upon her husband's plate, "doubtless it contains the missive which just now will be doubly welcome, although so tardy in appearing," and she proceeded to apply a gold key attached to her watch chain.

"My dear Euphine," expostulated her mother covering lock, key, and fingers, with her own hand to stay her movements, "forgive me, but will not your doing this bring on another paroxysm? I know Mr. Huntley makes such a point of handing out all the letters himself; indeed his childish delight in it should be indulged I must say. It is a mere trifle."

She went on quickly, observing the rising angry flush suffusing the otherwise handsome face before her.

"He has been very generous to us both, and his unhappy affliction ought to excite some sympathy; I tremble for the consequences of utter disregard of his wishes. Go, be advised in time; do not let affluence and good fortune harden your heart; remember, whatever you suffer through him comes as a matter of course, for you married him with your eyes wide open to his infirmities."

"Is it for you, mother, to taunt me with this? You, who pressed on the match in every way, making light of any doubts I ever uttered, who to gain your object, hunted him down from London to Brighton, and back again, inciting me to ex-

travagant display lest by chance the golden prize should slip?"

"No, I acknowledge it does not come well from me, Euphine, but you challenge my interference by your stubborn wilfulness. Why not try to make the best of a bad bargain and humour his fancies? All then might be in your own hands, or at least, you would live in peace."

"Or cease to disturb your complacency when you are staying in the house, which is about the truth you mean me to reap from this lecture. Rest assured I shall not endure entirely alone. A handsome sum is settled upon you, and as you profit by the advantages, so must you also bear a portion of the inconvenience."

While speaking she had abstracted whatever belonged to herself, closing the bag with a sharp metallic click, seating herself before her as yet untasted breakfast, observing,

"The newspapers he must give out himself, otherwise, as you say, it will be a cruel deprivation."

Poor Mrs. Silvertown leant back in her chair the picture of despair, feeling the taunt keenly, and understanding without the accompanying look it was intended as a punishment for her presumption in interfering with her daughter's wilful course.

"Here is Reston-Crowe's letter at last," said Euphine carelessly, and silence again fell upon the two, broken only by the occasional clink of a tea-cup or the rattle of a knife and fork, the younger testifying most unmistakeably her indignation at the contents of her letter, every now and then as she cast her eye up and down the rather closely written pages, while proceeding with her repast.

Soon there was a slight diversion caused by Mr. Bradley's entrance: any addition just then would have been welcome. After greeting the ladies, he

delivered his morning bulletin. His charge was fast asleep, having passed a wretchedly unquiet night. He had just come from his bed-side, where he had been detained watching his laboured slumber, and thought him both ill and feverish; it was painful, he remarked, to note the delicacy apparent in every pinched feature, as he lay in that deep unsettled sleep.

Euphine said rest would prove a better restorative than anything they could devise, perhaps he would remain thus for hours; and she looked very much as if she hoped such might be the case.

As he received from her his cup of tea, Mr. Bradley could not resist glancing comprehensively, although perhaps involuntarily, at the closed post-bag, and from it to the open papers by her plate, she answered the look which was certainly sufficiently expressive.

"If you are expecting news you will have to wait, as Christopher" (she never by any chance called him her husband) "must be indulged in this whim, which he fancies adds so much to his importance. This one being a letter of importance, it was necessary I should take out at once without waiting."

Mr. Bradley made no answer; he had held his irksome post quite long enough to be discreetly reticent when occasion required.

He was poor; others of his family were dependent upon his exertions. An elder branch of the Huntleys had promised him a government appointment, one really lucrative, but he must wait for the vacancy, and in the mean time had offered him this post with his hapless nephew, the handsome salary attached securing his acceptance. He was a right feeling, kind-hearted man, but it must be admitted that he was longing for his emancipation.

After breakfast Euphine shut herself up alone to study Reston-Crowe's advice. It tallied exactly with that expressed by Suthermann. "The patient must be indulged; they might rule him if they pleased in that way, but by thwarting never. There were general directions to be followed, diet to be carefully studied, as stomach had much to do with his health; regular exercise was another point strongly urged, either equestrian or pedestrian, guarding against over-fatigue."

Euphine had hinted at the desirableness of a London season, or failing that a foreign tour, which unless pronounced particularly objectionable she should much desire. But it was decidedly and strongly opposed, the constant change operating upon weak nerves would be the worst possible policy. The exact opposite was what he (Reston-Crowe) would recommend; a quiet country life, a sameness almost amounting to monotony, provided he were surrounded (and great stress was laid on this) by a cheerful home-circle. The M.D. assuming his wife would be his constant daily companion, prayed of her to let anything approaching to gloom be as far removed on the one hand as inordinate gaiety on the other. These were the clearest directions he could offer to alleviate so pitiable a calamity, and the letter ended with a gentle intimation that if these instructions were not closely adhered to, serious results might ensue.

Thus the feverish longing for participation in the whirl of fashionable dissipation, of joining in the ephemeral pleasures of the day, must be given up for the present at least. To yield herself unreservedly to all her husband's exactions, Euphine felt would be a wearisome task, which she contemplated with discontented repinings.

Mrs. Silverton received her congé with little ceremony, glad to be dismissed to the solitary en-

joyment of her handsome allowance, secretly hoping it might be many a long day before her imperious daughter again required her to visit them at Hilvington.

CHAPTER XI.

MARSTON-LE-GRANGE.

THE wedding tour had prospered gloriously, and at its close they had returned late one bright starry night after a day of unusual fatigue, to take possession of Marston-le-Grange. Kate wrote home that, tired as she was, the more so, from the various modes of transit to which they were obliged to accommodate themselves, changing from steamboat to jolting fly; thence to rail and again to the road; Arthur had made her pause, with her foot upon the doorstep, to observe the "Salve" wrought in cunning devices on the entrance flag-stone, a welcome loudly and heartily echoed by a most formidable array of servants lining the entrance hall, headed by a gray-haired butler and stately housekeeper rustling in old-fashioned silk: a welcome, genuinely expressed, even down to the insignificant scullion, who brought up the rear; and to each one of whom Kate had felt it incumbent upon herself, on this eventful first appearance, to address a few kindly words, according to their respective stations, thereby inaugurating herself in her new office with universal approbation. To Arthur it was a moment of supreme felicity, thus to install his treasured wife,—the presiding genius of his much-loved home—the centre from whom, by God's blessing, should radiate the loving rule

and sympathetic influence which he so particularly desired should stamp their intercourse with all around of whatever degree, and who would aid him in the judicious arrangements and benevolent plans which were henceforth to brighten his own hearth-stone as well as those of others within their sphere.

The scheme of crossing the channel, and indulging the gentleman's love of wandering on classic ground, had been quite given up when he found how entirely Kate was opposed to it; she had told him her reason for not falling in with his wishes, and he could but acknowledge there was much truth in what she said. He knew how tenderly each one of the Howard family loved the other, and therefore yielded the point at once, sincerely hoping his bride was making herself needlessly uneasy.

They had had the offer of a pretty country seat in Wales; a cousin of Mrs. Howard's, who was abroad, had placed it at their disposal for as long as they pleased; so Arthur and Kate had gladly accepted the offer, spending the month wandering about the principality, extending their excursions as the fancy of the moment dictated, making Cwmbe Yston their pied-à-terre.

At the appointed time they returned home, and Kate wrote sheet upon sheet in describing her delight with Marston-le-Grange. Arthur had behaved infamously in allowing her to remain so entirely ignorant of its many beauties. Large and rambling, it was the very perfection of a country residence, abounding in mysterious passages, difficult and unintelligible to modern perceptions, ending in all sorts of odd corners. Now up five steps, introducing you to a remote extremity leading apparently nowhere; then down four, conducting to a suite of angular rooms, hung with tapestry,

whose faded beauties, more remarkable for industry than taste, claimed to represent the Queen of Sheba's interview with the renowned King Solomon; but she should reserve the minute examination of this for some pitilessly wet day when they would be there, also it would be great fun to explore it together; it was in the oldest part, and would just suit Mary, it wore such a mouldily ancient look, so evidently suggestive of ladies and knights of the dark ages, "my ancestors, remember," (and the pronoun was profusely dashed,) "consequently to be treated with all due respect. Ah, well!

"Their bones are dust and their armour's rust,
And their souls are with the saints, I trust."

Of the entrance hall she should say nothing, for all description would fail to do it justice—to be appreciated it must be seen. "And such a staircase in the centre," the letter went on. "Mother will never get to the top, from admiration of its fine oak carving, a coach and four might easily be driven up, always supposing the horses well-trained; and then, the corridor intersected with niches, deep closets and partitions all carved in panel; black with age, the delicate moulding betokening the refined taste of days long gone by. But you must come and judge for yourselves, as I shrink from describing it, lest by presenting an indifferent picture I should mar the pleasure of your first impressions."

The flower garden she was going to take under her especial superintendence, and had begun already committing to memory more hard, long, Latin names than she had ever supposed it possible for herself even to pronounce. She meant to astonish Mary by the brilliancy of her parterres, the future arrangement of which gave her such

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pleasant occupation, the only drawback being that it was not yet the time of year for commencing operations, but as her town-bred ignorance required no small degree of instruction, it was perhaps as well that she should have leisure to get up the subject. She had had the pleasure of entertaining Walter Wiltonthorpe, her first visitor, to stay in the house; he came for only two days, *en route* to Liverpool, whither he was hastening about marbles, stone, and encaustic tiles, requisites for the church, which he informed her with great exultation, was progressing capitally at every stage, presenting so graceful an appearance that it had never been necessary to qualify their admiration by looking forward to what it would be, when the walls were finished or when the roofs were added, as the case might be. At every point its beauty was evident, and from this circumstance he augured well for its completed loveliness; extra numbers of men were employed on all parts, and he confidently hoped it would be ready for consecration in less time than the two years, as had been contemplated at the outset. He had shown them sketches and plans, which were oozing out of all his pockets, and if it rose a facsimile, the most imaginative would have nothing left to desire.

Arthur and Walter had discussed every branch of ecclesiastical architecture and term, until Kate had been obliged to hide her diminished head in sheer dismay at her ignorance.

Probably Hilary had told them Mr. Wiltonthorpe was upon the point of giving up his curacy; in fact, he was only remaining now until his place was filled, he could then devote his whole time and attention to the all-absorbing post of interest. It seemed almost absurd, she went on, that any one should look forward with such extreme delight to being Vicar in his own parish, and that

such a retired and poor little place. A man possessing youth, health, fortune, interest, every accessory in the opinion of the world for obtaining dignities and power, would be thought out of his senses to choose such a position, by those who knew not with what fervour he had breathed his ordination vow, and that he counted it his highest privilege to be a labourer in the harvest of souls. Her husband and Walter, she said, had now entered on another long discussion upon vicarial and rectorial dues, from which she was glad to take refuge and pour out her feelings of insignificance in this communication. Would they also tell Hilary she had a "crow to pick" with him for omitting to make known the great beauty of the gardens at Fontenelle; they were the acknowledged gems of the county, and he had only mentioned them incidentally, which was the less pardonable from his usual discernment on all subjects. They had engaged to pay a visit of a few days to Lady Wiltonthorpe on their way to town for the Christmas Festival, and then she should form her own opinion thereon.

She was almost forgetting a rather important message with which she had been intrusted for her mother. They dined last week at Crossthwaite Lodge, about eight miles off; the host was a friend of Arthur's uncle; they had met a certain Dr. Brereton, who had made a point of being introduced to her upon discovering how lately she had relinquished the name of Howard.

He had known her mother as a young girl, at least so he averred to her, and by his account much of their youth had been passed together; this statement should be received cautiously she opined, as his name had never been mentioned among them; probably his memory was a little defective when reviewing events through the medium of years.

He was a most charming person, possessed of more universal information than almost any one she had ever come across; rather curious perhaps respecting their family, but most sympathetic, and upon hearing of dear Ernest's illness he had manifested extreme concern, saying, he had made organic diseases his peculiar branch of study, and he had been thought to have obtained some proficiency therein; if her brother felt any inclination to profit by his experience, it would confer upon him the greatest obligation to put it to the test. She inclosed his card, at his own particular request, and since had heard so much of his skill and ability, that both Arthur and herself hoped they would at least consider whether it might not be desirable to have a consultation with him.

"Darling Kate," said Mary, as they finished the long epistle, "how very happy she seems."

Her father thought, if this letter were to be a specimen, stationery would soon be scarce in Cheshire.

"I do not think though she will become any great wonder in the gardening way; it is certainly not her forte."

"My love," answered Mr. Howard, "I am sure she was always fond of flowers; you must forget how often she used to finish her breakfast in haste to accompany me in the brougham, in order to return by Covent Garden, sometimes almost ruining herself in the flower-market."

"Oh, yes, papa, I think we all share alike a passion for cut flowers;" and Mary brushed her cheek caressingly over the bouquet at her elbow; "I do not know what we should do without them; but it is their cultivation in which, I think, Kate will fail; she will never have patience to watch them developing from the tiny seed to such beauties as these" touching the vase. "You know when we

took a fancy to sow mignonette at all the back windows one year, she would constantly shift the mould, shaking it about gently and by degrees, to watch any approaching vitality, consequently the boxes presented a woefully meagre appearance. Now with the bulbs in the glasses we managed well and had a fine show."

All hastened to make Mrs. Charles a sharer in the pleasure the letter had given them, but its news was not cordially received, unfortunately her name was only just mentioned therein, which gave dire offence, and she expressed a very strong sentiment that Kate would soon feel herself bored to death in that out-of-the-way place; of course it was all very well to write in such spirits just now, the honey-moon was scarcely passed. By the way she had often been going to ask, How did she manage now for daily service? That fancy might be passing off with her single life; she herself, however, never looked for such things to continue.

"Arthur and Kate," said Mary, "have both frequently talked over that and other deprivations, and how much they should feel it, but it may not always be so. The rector is an old man, who was educated before the revival of primitive doctrine and practice in the Church, and so he may not see the necessity of change. They are better off than many country parishes; they must do the best they can for the present, and trust in God for future blessings. The schools are excellently managed and so good, they have been honourably mentioned in the Government reports; the villages on the whole also are well attended to, in fact, the parish is very well regulated, taking it all in all."

Mrs. Howard prevented any further remarks upon the subject, by inquiring for her little grand-

child. She was out with her nurse; but Julia was glad to consult about a young French girl she intended adding to her establishment as a sort of nursery governess. Mrs. Howard looked grave; Fanny was of too tender years to begin lessons yet.

Julia interposed quickly; she did not intend her really to have school-room hours, only to get into regular habits; learning French and English together was very desirable now that she was young, and could easily become accustomed to speak a foreign language fluently, which was only to be done by having a native at her elbow from the first. She had drawn out a very imperfect sketch for her daughter's education, and one great point in it was the study of languages; she should have a Parisian with her until she was twelve years old; then a German maid for the next six years; and in that way or something similar she hoped to make her a good linguist, able to meet foreigners with ease in society; she herself felt the want of the latter language, and although she could manage to get on tolerably with French, still it did not come pleasantly without an effort, so she was determined Fanny's acquirements should not be neglected.

Mrs. Howard in the main was of very much the same opinion. In the present state of society to be a good linguist was a necessity. "But, Julia," she continued, "you were going to mention some young person who appeared to you an acquisition."

"Oh, yes, a girl about twenty, named Louissette. Her manners are so taking, so free from all *gaucherie*; her speech so fluent that I have almost decided upon taking her. Louissette also was an uncommon name; almost all French maids were Annettes or Maries; not that this latter was any

real recommendation, of course, but in a variety of ways I should be glad to close with her."

Mrs. Howard asked where she had heard of her? and if she had inquired as to her character?

"I must acknowledge there is a little difficulty there at present, but I have pretty nearly made up my mind to overlook it. The girl has lived with a family now abroad, therefore I have had to apply to a certain Lady Dalton, who to my extreme surprise had claimed an interest in my little child, as an old schoolfellow of yours. She inquired after you most excitedly, recalling with almost garrulous delight many passages of your early life. I am at a loss to conceive how you can think it right with marriageable daughters to ignore such influential friends. No one ever heard you mention this lady's name, or make an effort to get your children into her set; it is a line of action so peculiar, and one I cannot understand, thus to keep aloof from every one worth knowing. In order to atone for any deficiency, however, I responded at once to Lady Dalton's amiable reminiscences, and we have struck up quite a sudden friendship; Lady Dalton sent all sorts of messages to you, and also cards for her concert next week."

These Julia produced. Mrs. Howard received them with a smile of pleasure, the sensation of being fondly remembered after a lapse of years was very grateful to one of her affectionate disposition. In her usual quiet decided manner, she expressed her regret that any relative should have had to blush for her even in thought, but Julia knew how little she cared for the great world, neither her husband nor herself thinking it would conduce to the happiness of their family to be intimately mixed up with it; had such not been their conviction, they would perhaps have sacrificed their

own personal love of retirement, and have encountered the needful amount of gaiety, however repugnant to themselves. "But," she continued, "we are forgetting the business in hand, "what transpired about Louissette?"

"I shall ever feel grateful to her," answered Mrs. Charles, "as being the cause of my introduction to so charming a person, although I suppose, strictly speaking, I ought hardly to take her.

"It appears she got into disgrace in her last situation, for some deceit or falsehood. No, that was not clearly proved; there was a suspicion of her having listened at keyholes, or abstracted letters, in order to make herself acquainted with the family affairs. But your old friend was very sorry for her, and thought that perhaps having had one good fright, and some punishment, she might be more circumspect in future. At least, what she said was, that being so young and in a foreign country, she would not turn her back upon her, lest worse might ensue, she had consented to say all that could be said in her favour, consistent with truth, but would neither advise me to take her nor otherwise, contenting herself with relating the facts of the case as it stood."

"Which speaks for itself of her redeeming points," said Mrs. Howard, "surely, my love, you will not be satisfied with such a doubtful character, as you contemplate placing her in close attendance upon Fanny."

"Now, that is so like you extra good ones never giving people a chance. It reminds me of a remark I heard the other day, of the self-satisfied ones going off to their numerous services, displaying their red-letter, red-cross books, praying to be delivered from all 'hardness of heart,' and then subjecting their neighbours' conduct to the severest tests. I flatter myself I am exhibiting the charity

we are commanded to practise, for I have decided in her favour, and she is to enter upon her new duties on Monday week."

"But, my dear Julia," said the elder lady, whose face had worn a deeper look of concern as she went on, "consider well before you expose your darling to the possible influence of dishonesty, deceit, and falsehood. I am sure Charles will not sanction this."

"I beg you will not mention the subject to him," interposed Julia with some warmth; "he leaves all domestic arrangements to me, and beyond the fact that I have engaged a French attendant, he is ignorant of the whole affair. Naturally, after having been warned, I shall be on the alert and look carefully after her; but even supposing there were any danger, Fanny is so much with me, that it will effectually prevent all contamination. Besides, Louisette is, I hope, cured of those faults by the lesson she has received. You will see what a remarkably well-behaved person she is, and so handy too, she can clean laces, and make up ribands, in short, has fingers made for all such delicate occupations. At all events," she added, seeing her auditors by no means agreed with her, "I can try her with very close watching for a month, and then decide."

Soon after they took leave, meeting Fanny in the street, who ran after them to make her grandmother admire a new hat and feather she wore, and to kiss Aunt Mary.

"Poor little mite," said Mary, as they passed on, "think of her about to be placed under the tutelage of a French gouvernante."

"I am seriously annoyed with Julia," said her mother, "it is so wrong to expose that little one to evil communication for the sake of the trumpery

ephemeral advantages she puts in the opposite scale, those French girls are frequently only half educated, sent over here with the one idea firmly implanted in their minds, that they are to get money, and benefit themselves at whatever cost. Many are cunning, and without principle, although I should be sorry to condemn all in a sweeping accusation. I must observe Louissette attentively myself for Fanny's sake; it would be better even if Julia took her for her own maid, or any other post, rather than expose the child to such questionable influence."

"But, mother, dear little Fan is so open, that she is sure artlessly to relate all that occurs, and that will be one great safeguard."

"A very slender one, Mary, for if Louissette be deceitful, her first impulse will be to check all free communication between Fanny and her mother. I would rather the dear child were left for a time to her respectable English nurse. But I fear we can do little in it, for as to raising a question between husband and wife, it is what I have ever refrained from doing."

The subject was dropped, and they ended their walk in silence. But Mary knew it rested in her mother's mind, and caused her much solicitude.

CHAPTER XII.

AT REST.

SPRING had come again. The early months bringing in their train that renewing freshness we all hail in the glad new year, a visible type of

the Great Resurrection. The sun was beginning to lengthen his diurnal visit, the occasional brightness cheering alike animal and vegetable life. Pure elastic spring, whose genial breath clothes the hill side with verdure, jewelling it with an inimitable mosaic of varied petals and vernal buds, a tapestry of Nature's weaving. The leaves that in autumn had fluttered in rustling showers from the parent trees lying damp and withered on the ground, had performed their appointed office in fertilising the earth from whence they sprung, causing the reproduction of others; which, when they too had lived the bright summer through, would in their turn wither, decay, and become also enrichers of the soil. Promising, cheerful spring, whose birds and flowers all sing of hope, rendering musical every branch, bursting with its newly-formed leaves, how brightly it was merging into summer, the golden sunbeams, the pleasant invigorating air, causing to most people happy sensations of renovated health and spirits. But alas! in one dear home was sadness and the shadow of a great sorrow. The angel of death was hovering over that dwelling, prepared to bear away the gentle spirit so calmly passing from the dear ones, to free him from the heat and burden of the day, and give him rest from the battle of life.

Ernest was sinking in a more gradual decay than those afflicted with a heart disease are generally supposed to endure, yet the anxious watchers could hardly dare hope that their beloved one would be spared to them until another year of grace. In the depth of this, a peculiarly raw wet unhealthy winter, poor Ernest had caught a severe cold, inducing influenza of the very worst description. He had gone out one day when the weather was tolerable, and called on his Aunt Bayley, who, poor lady, was ever rejoiced to seize upon any one lenient

enough to talk over quietly the many failings of that scapegrace Oliver. Ernest sympathising with her yearning fondness for the cousin he really loved, and knowing how few would speak of him except to censure, from which the indulgent mother shrunk with exquisite pain, prolonged his charitable visit most imprudently; when he started homeward, a thick heavy fog was falling, which so penetrated all his clothing, that he got thoroughly damp and chilled, and then the attack came on which eventually defied all medical treatment. A severe irritating cough, caused the reappearance of all his worst symptoms. Mrs. Howard and Mary were on the alert night and day. If good nursing, and being tenderly cared for and looked after, could have wrought a miracle, surely it would have done so in this case.

Dr. Brereton had been called in, and held a consultation with the cleverest men of the day, but they could only shake their heads in despair. All that science could do was done, conclusions were deduced from certain appearances which would have been favourable but for certain other indications, finally all agreed that every means had been taken which were possible, and that he could not be in better hands, not one usual remedy having been omitted. And so they took leave, with the handsome fees poor Mr. Howard would willingly have multiplied by any number to have read in their faces one gleam of hope; the only shadow of comfort was, their confirmation of Dr. Brereton's opinion that his death would not be sudden as was usual in similar cases.

Slowly and heavily the receding footsteps passed from the house, leaving behind a mountain of anguish and dread. Dr. Brereton alone remained; he could not bear to leave them, knowing the weight of sorrow, which like a leaden pall, had

crushed beneath it all hope when his compeers had departed.

The early twilight was slowly enveloping the city; one by one the gas lights in the street were gradually emerging from the grey atmosphere; the windows were half shaded by the multitudinous folds of the heavy damask curtains, leaving the recesses of the inner room in sombre darkness; he sat there in a low arm-chair, racking his brain for some remedy by which to stay the giant strides of the universal leveller, knowing himself powerless, and yet unwilling to own it where he so ardently longed to be of use. There were reasons why he would have bartered all his previous hard-earned knowledge for the privilege of administering relief in this one case.

As he sat thus ruminating upon the different courses of treatment he had followed, occasionally interrupting his thoughts by a half uttered prayer, a low choking sob broke the stillness, startling the listener by its tone of condensed anguish; another and another followed, as though some one had laid an unnatural restraint upon their feelings for a length of time, so that a short indulgence in grief was a luxury which the highly distended nerves demanded, now that the restriction was withdrawn. He moved cautiously and silently unwilling to intrude upon the stricken mother, who, after the first paroxysm, essayed by a convulsive effort to calm herself, murmuring in broken accents, "My God, teach me submission to Thy Holy Will!" And as her voice sunk to a whisper, she seemed almost awaiting a visible response in her attitude of deep sorrow.

After awhile he thought it best to make known his presence; to remain an intruder upon such a scene was unendurable, he therefore made a brusque movement, which had the desired effect

of catching her attention; rousing herself, she demanded authoritatively, "who was there?" and why they had allowed her to suppose herself alone?

He came forward at once apologising for the accident.

"It is too dark to distinguish any one: I am Dr. Brereton; I have stayed, thinking I might possibly be of some service, but I would in no wise encroach upon your privacy, which now of all times, should be held sacred;" forcing upon himself a calmness he was far from feeling, he took her hand, assuring her of his commiseration; "surely though," he continued, "you were prepared for this report? you could not have anticipated any other."

As if fresh hope had risen in her breast by his compassionate voice and action, she all at once started forward, giving free vent to her thoughts, exclaiming,

"Willie, we were friends in childhood; there are none so true as those to whom we are bound by our earliest and best recollections, by the remembrance of the past. I ask you, oh, save my son! Can it be that you have no resource, you whose life has been passed in this one study? all consider your skill superior to that of all others; men say you can work a cure where others are powerless. In mercy bring forward those hidden secrets now; surely, surely, there is some medicine you have hitherto forgotten, some restorative not used in ordinary cases, some treatment you could adopt, painful perhaps in its application, slow and tedious in process it may be, but tell me there is still some depth of science to be penetrated which may produce effect now that all else has failed."

He had retained her hand during all this pas-

sionate appeal, gazing intently at her expression of anguish, and at the ashen lips which could hardly frame words so volubly poured forth, and when he spoke his husky uneven voice told of unwonted emotion restrained by an iron will.

"Margaret," he said, and even speaking the name sounded strangely in his ear, "long years ago I loved one, like unto whom I have never met another woman; for her dear sake I have lived cheerless and alone, treasuring in my heart opinions and ideas she alone could have understood, cherishing in my solitary rooms all the flowers I have ever known her wear, becoming in some sort a musician, that I might renew sounds inseparably connected with her loved memory. And now, when life is declining, the romance of youth past and gone, middle age throwing its halo over those fitful times, till they seem like a dim religious picture, beautiful with a light that is departed, we are again thrown together, and with memories of all this in my heart, do you think I would not strain every nerve for the benefit of one so dear to you? I would give up my life willingly were it possible to save your darling. If skill could compass his cure, believe me you would not have to ask, the happiness of conducing to your peace of mind would be too highly prized for me to suffer such an opportunity to escape. But it may not be; I have the desire—not the power. That religion which has been your guide through life, causing you to refuse a true heart, because of his faith, must in your hour of need, uphold you. The decree has gone forth—your son must die. No power on earth can save him."

Again the poor mother sunk in overwhelming agony. "Leave me," she gasped, "leave me alone with my burden."

Lingeringly, with many a backward look, he traversed the large room, his own heart aching and throbbing for the grief of her his early love. It seemed hard, very hard, that his fiat should have dealt her this heavy blow.

He bent his steps towards Ernest's room: the same where we have known Hilary spend so many happy mornings, it looked now as always, pleasant and cheerful; a fire was burning brightly in the grate, flowers were on the table, a daily offering from Mrs. Merton, whose one object in existence at this period was the regular morning drive to procure them, and whose kind heart experienced almost a child's delight in hearing, as they took care she should, of the invalid's appreciation of them and the donor. Books and prints were there, also mixed up with glasses, spoons, and medicine bottles; anyone accustomed to a sick room knows how such accumulate, notwithstanding the ministry of neat loving fingers.

Mary sat near, and reclining on a sofa lay the object of so much solicitude, of so many earnest prayers. He was looking much as usual, dressed in a loose light coat, except that his beautiful eyes were unusually bright, his lips, just then, cherry red, although they were scarcely of the same colour five minutes together, sometimes quite blue, next pale, and then again glowing as with exuberant health, the variation indicating the defective circulation. His small thin hand was resting carelessly upon the arm of the couch.

The Doctor and he had struck up a great friendship, and he welcomed him joyfully, saying,

"I am glad you did not take your departure ceremoniously with the rest, it annoyed me that another's advice should be even asked; for I feel how very little there is to be done, only my dear

father is naturally anxious. I trust to you to make them realise what is inevitable, but indeed I am not worse to-day."

"No, no," answered the other cheerfully, "we must try and make you better."

Ernest slightly shook his head.

Dr. Brereton continued: "Do you think you could undergo a rather painful process? I mean, do you think you are equal to bearing a little pain on the chance of deriving some benefit from it?"

"Yes," he said quietly; "I do not shrink from what is necessary. I know you cannot prolong life; but for my parent's sake I should like nothing left untried, hereafter it will be a comfort to them to reflect that there was no omission. Have you decided upon anything?"

"There is one thing still left," answered his friend; "being cupped over the heart will be a painful operation, rendered more so by that hacking cough; but I think it may produce freer pulsation. The result may be beneficial. I have a strong wish to try it."

"That of itself is conclusive," said Ernest: "When shall it be?"

"Are you equal to it to-night? or to-morrow will do quite as well."

"Now at once," was the decisive answer.

"In an hour then I will return with the operator; if during that time you should change your mind, he can but be sent away for the present."

However, having once made up his mind, there was little likelihood of wavering; the patient made not the slightest demur, and underwent what must have been little short of agony with perfect firmness. To those present, the witnesses of this painful scene, it was hardly less trying; for the sufferings of the mind are ever greater in degree than those of the body, and sometimes one

moistened those changing lips with a morsel of jelly, or another softly parted his heavy hair from off his white open forehead: once Mrs. Howard offered her smelling salts, but he gently put them back, saying, "No, mother, I am not faint." Poor Mary held the candle for the operator to perform his office, her waxen face bearing testimony to the restraint fixed upon herself.

The glasses had been on some time, he made no complaint, but eventually looking up whispered, "It is drawing fiercely."

They were removed, a plaister covered the wound, and the operation was over; Dr. Brereton, after due examination of the blood, pronouncing it more successful in effect than he could have supposed possible, cheering them all by his report upon it.

Ernest rallied from that hour; the next day and the next he was easier, better in spirits, more comfortable in all ways. The fluttering which had produced such faint sickness entirely passed away.

Dr. Brereton's name was never mentioned but in accents of the warmest gratitude.

The happy change was communicated to Hilary, who wrote such a joyous letter that they all thought some bright gleam had crossed his own difficult path. He should be most impatient until he could witness for himself the improvement it gave him such pleasure to contemplate. He should come and judge for himself as early as possible.

He speedily accomplished his purpose, and a bright sunny day in June found him re-united to the friend he loved so well, and whose changed appearance moved him beyond expression. True, he was easier, he had less oppression, and more freedom in breathing, but there was the one look never to be mistaken, the seal with which death marks his own; and Hilary, as he sat by him, observed how every feature was as it were spiritual-

ised, everything connected with this passing world cast aside as of no importance. He forbore however to remark upon all this to the family until he had had time to study how far the feeling of hope or dread was in possession of each heart. At once and without hesitation taking up his abode there, he made up his mind not to leave him until the loved one was released from toil and pain to carry on the voice of prayer and praise in that paradise of rest, where he would await the great day of Judgment.

The gay summer months were passing, July was gone, August was approaching. There was no thought of country air this year; hot and sultry as it might be, no one spoke of change: all knew too well what must occur before that was possible; all were trying to look the inevitable end in the face, to bow their heads humbly to the will of God. He was never confined to bed, the family almost lived in his little sanctum. Hilary was a true comfort to both father and mother, poor stricken parents as they were; and what he was to that departing one only himself could tell, daily ministering to him, soothing and comforting, raising the heavenly hopes which in his great humility would sometimes flag, administering the ordinances of the Church, as Ernest once whispered to him, "being to him a guardian angel upon earth."

His strength seemed gradually to give way, his weakness appearing only in his disinclination to movement of any kind. One morning he was later in his room than usual, and Mary went to find him half dressed in his easy chair; he smilingly called her to him, bidding her bathe his face with cold water, for he was growing very idle. Lovingly she performed the task, then smoothing back his rich brown hair, she observed that his was the most

beautiful forehead in the family. He gazed intently in her face, and taking up the scissors from the dressing-table bade her cut off some locks of his hair, saying, "It may give my dear mother pleasure to have them a little while hence."

Poor Mary, she never forgot the nervous trembling which seized her frame at his tone and manner; she felt, as he intended she should, that the great change was not far off. He was calling her attention to the quick pulsations of his temples and throat, the convulsive throbbing was painful to witness; at that moment their father entered to perform his daily task of assisting and gently placing him on the couch, an office he would permit no one else to interfere with.

Dr. Brereton came as usual, and after a long visit went down stairs, but at the door he paused, sent his brougham away, begging to be allowed to write letters in the library. He sat there for about an hour, listening anxiously for every sound in the house; presently a violent ringing, and the noise of many feet rushing up stairs, told him he had not waited in vain; passing them all quickly, he was instantaneously by the dying boy, whose pale white hands were working nervously as he gasped for breath; raising him a little he called for more pillows, ordering them to fan him slowly.

Ernest slightly revived, murmuring "Mother, dear—; My father—" They were on either side of him; his speech was fast becoming indistinct. Kate and her husband, Julia and Charles, were soon added to that solemn scene. He whispered to all to kiss him. When it came to Mary's turn, she was detained bending longer over him than the rest by some sign or movement from him, some communication of spirit to spirit, for there was no word that could be heard.

Hilary now commenced the celebration of the

Holy Eucharist in the deep stillness, broken only by their sobs. He approached the bed with the sacred elements ; when he had received them, Ernest's gaze passed slowly and steadily round, as if counting those present ; his lips emitted some sound, a meaning caught only by the mother's ear, for she motioned to Hilary to kiss him ; the face over which the beauty of death was fast creeping looked fondly at her, who could thus best interpret his last wish. He turned upon them one look of angelic sweetness, comprehending all, smiling as only they can who are entering the portals beyond the grave.

There was one long, suspended, fluttering sigh, as he folded his mother's hands within his own, forming the holy sign over the surging, swelling heart, labouring as if it would burst all bounds ; there was one deep breath, snapt as it were asunder, one feeble movement, and the released spirit had fled, claimed by that bright angel band guarding the shores of that full-flowing river of life, whose every drop is a human soul.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY.

POOR Hilary, overwhelmed with grief, and worn by conflicting anxieties, still felt compelled to lay aside his personal concerns, in the effort to support and console the dear friends who were suffering so acutely from their sad bereavement. Death seems always unexpected at the last. Persons may be supposed to have been prepared, by

months, or years of illness, and as in this case the certainty that life could not be prolonged for any length of time; at the moment all this makes little difference. The solemn advent of death never fails to give a sudden blow.

The world, with its usual felicity of judgment, might argue upon the delicacy of Ernest's constitution, and say that the seeds of disease had shown themselves too decidedly in his childhood for any, even the most sanguine, to have anticipated his reaching man's estate. Alas! for the fallacy of such reasoning; let those who would use it watch beside a sick bed and note each change, observing how the flame of life flickers, now sinking almost to total prostration, now brightening in a manner the most experienced nurse will be quite unprepared for: perhaps the patient may so far rally as to take nourishment and seem capable of unwonted exertions, rousing himself from the dreamy languor which was considered to be the precursor of the great change, and appearing to throw off, by some wonderful accession of strength, the touch of death's icy fingers. Then again the balance is all in the other scale; life may seem to be ebbing fast, drowsy and still the patient lies perhaps for days, refusing sustenance, the parched lips only moistened by loving, watching hands, no noise appearing to disturb him, no sound to rouse him: and so hope and despair alternately reign, until in some moment least expected after such varying moods, the earthly tenement is deserted, and the soul returns to its Maker.

The first week of grief had passed, the funeral was over, and all were trying to accommodate themselves to the dreary change as best they might.

Ernest's apartments had been left precisely as he had occupied them, the bed-room had of course been rearranged, and all appertaining to that sor-

rowful event removed; but in the sitting-room, his own little sanctum, where those he most loved had so constantly gathered round him, nothing had been touched, by his mother's express orders.

The arm-chair, where he used to recline always, in his best days looking too fragile for a long sojourn here; the book-shelves, containing a few volumes which he most loved; a side-table, covered with scraps of Oliver Bayley's music; and in the centre his accordion, which, touched by the master hand, had soothed and delighted the sick boy for hours, were all in their usual places, and on the table there still lay a portfolio containing sketches and plans for his hospital, and peeping from it a caricature, an army of lame, blind, and impotent folk clamouring at the gate, with O.B. fecit, on a cornerstone, purporting to be faithful portraits of the inmates when it should be in full force some fifty years to come.

In a recess far apart from all else, was the case containing the sacramental service from which he had received his last communion, and which of course belonged to Hilary. He came softly into the room a few days before his departure, and found all things thus in their several places, as if again to be used: but how mournfully deserted all appeared! and as busy memory conjured up the pleasant scenes of the past his cheek grew pale and his chest heaved as though he were breathing some thick unwholesome atmosphere.

He knelt by the blank vacant seat, and prayed fervently for strength now that his hour of trial was approaching,—strength to carry out the wishes of his dead unknown father, and crush all selfishness, all yearning for a felicity, which under other circumstances it was just possible he might have indulged, so that at least he alone might be the sufferer; he asked for grace to give up his inmost

desires, to throw himself, divested of every distracting thought, with all energy of body and fervour of soul into his Master's work.

He had remained thus in deep absorbing supplication for some time, when a hand was laid nervously upon his shoulder, and a broken voice almost querulously asked if he had no comfort to offer to one most miserable? It was poor Oliver, who had been and was utterly wretched, cherishing his grief as a proof of his affection, refusing his mother's often repeated although somewhat weak attempts at consolation. Hilary without speaking bent his head and made one earnest prayer that God would of His great mercy, when He so pleased, vouchsafe light and understanding to this man's darkened soul, and grant to himself strength and wisdom in the effort he was about to make on his behalf. Rising he walked through the outer room, closed and locked the door; coming back he found Oliver sitting with his face buried in his hands, and in that attitude he remained for some time in silence. At length Oliver passionately exclaimed,

"Life is unendurable now that he is gone! the only one I could trust implicitly, the friend whom I loved with a love passing that of woman, in whose truth there was no shadow of wavering. Dear Ernest! one always felt he was superior to this rough world, a fit companion for impalpable spirits, ethereal beings formed of an essence too subtle for contact with such dull material bodies as ours, with intellects too refined for this vile earth; cast in a mould too delicate for—"

He was proceeding rapidly in the generally received style of such jargon, when Hilary sternly demanded if he judged this the time and place for similar metaphysical vapourings, "which," he continued, "will eventually overthrow all that is healthy in your mind, will sap your understand-

ing, and if persevered in will finally wreck your salvation. Here, surrounded by all that recalls him we both so valued, be advised and have done with those ideal raptures, these temptations of the devil, and turn your mind to a healthy, sound belief, such as was his who is perchance even now closer to us than we may imagine."

Oliver instinctively looked round with a creeping sensation of awe, which Hilary perceiving pressed his point with great dexterity, appealing to him through his affections, conjuring him to relieve his mind by a disclosure of the obstacles in the way of his belief.

But he was so impracticable, so wayward in disposition, the effort to impress his versatile mind seemed almost an impossibility; for quick as the fitting ideas his mood changed; even before they had conversed five minutes those softer influences were giving place to his long encouraged habits of scepticism as he demanded a reason, why he should confide in his companion?

Hilary at once referred to his sacred office, taking his stand upon the highest ground as the most likely to carry with it conviction.

"I am a priest of God, appointed by Him to minister to His people; His authority has been committed to me for that purpose. You must consult finally some adviser. No man can suffice to himself; why not open out before me the meshes of that net in which you are so unhappily entangled?"

"Auricular confession and sacerdotal absolution?" sneered Oliver, all his better inspirations on the verge of passing away.

"Those are questions," quietly answered Hilary, "upon which we will not enter now, they are included in the doctrines of our Church, as few I suppose would take upon themselves to deny.

But you are in no state to understand the deeper mysteries of the faith ; he who has no real sorrow for sin, nor a steadfast purpose of amendment of life, has no right to argue on the subject."

"Do you presume to say, then, that we are not to inquire what is the doctrine and teaching of the Church?" said Oliver angrily, his lip curling, his blue eye flashing, and all the old mocking spirit returning in full force: "this were truly going back to the dark ages. Saint as you aspire to be considered here, at least you show the cloven foot."

Hilary looked deeply pained ; he clasped his hands tightly together as he replied, "By hardening the heart we may resist the clearest truth, as we may exclude the noonday light by closing the eyes, yet it exists all the same. Nothing but a deeply felt knowledge of our burden of sin, and a determination by God's help to cast it off, can give any real interest to the inquiry you have just propounded. If these be wanting, a strife of words is worse than useless. Tell me truly, then, do you inquire respecting the Christian faith as a great vital truth on which your eternal hopes depend ? or are you not rather treating it as an open question, about which you hold your own private opinion just as other people have theirs on any of the agitated topics of the day?"

Oliver looked up quickly, his expression convincing Hilary he had probed his secret thoughts ; he remained silent, however, and the other continued.

"If you have never felt the depths of your own weakness and wretchedness ; if you have never felt your need of a SAVIOUR, never sought after God with a hearty desire to find Him, you are not fit to discuss theological questions. If you live in open defiance even of the law of your own conscience,

whose voice cannot be checked, you are unequal to deal with the Divine truths of the Gospel. For as S. Thomas à Kempis says, He who withdraweth himself from obedience, withdraweth himself from grace."

"I have neither energy nor spirits to argue now," said Oliver, the dejection of his tone and manner attesting his utter prostration. "All I know is, I am the most miserable dog in existence;" and he flung the words as it were in his companion's face.

"That you are feeling deeply, and are wretchedly unhappy, is sufficiently evident. But why not accept some alleviation of your misery when the opportunity offers? Remember, it may pass beyond recall."

"There is nothing you can say or do," he answered rudely, "that could give me a comfort. If there be consolation in religion, one so lost as myself is not likely to find it. I have long ago thrown away every chance, and I am conscious of it."

"There are two weapons," said his friend, "with which Satan assails men, which are directly opposed the one to the other, and yet equally effectual to serve his ends; I mean presumption and despair. The former has been your bane hitherto, take care that through a wilful stubbornness you are not overtaken by the latter now. It is an awful snare, for it is an insult to God's Omnipotence."

"Nay," said Oliver, "mine is a quiescent condition, I neither hope nor despond, I walk on alone in darkness as I suppose I shall do unto the end of the chapter."

"Our God is too merciful, Oliver, to allow any one to fail for want of help; consider how His warnings multiply around your onward path, even this last sorrowful event is as a message from heaven to you."

"On the contrary," he answered, "it is a trial

greater than I can bear, cutting me off, as it does, from all good influences. Some men are, I have heard, doomed to destruction, predestined is, I believe, the orthodox word, and perhaps I am one of those waifs drifting downward on the ever-widening circles of time, unconscious whither they are wafted until the final wave washes them upon the black shores of utter annihilation."

"Oliver, from the days of the flood downwards, there has been no destruction without ample warning; Noah for years and years devoted all his energies to constructing the ark, and men mocked him in the face of their own approaching ruin. In the days of Babylon the great warning was unheeded until the time came when the cup dropped from the lip, and a chill dread fell upon all; for, behold, God's hand on the wall no longer wrote a warning, but a doom. So also with Jerusalem, the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, shed over her even His own most sacred tears, and yet her children would not be warned; they crucified the LORD of Life, and, when least they looked for it, their day of destruction came with such woes as men had never known before. Year by year, even now, does the Church sound every Advent season her note of warning, and yet you dare to say that none has been vouchsafed to you. Remember, you cannot undo that which has once been done. The Holy Sign has been traced on your forehead in token of the baptismal covenant by which you were made a soldier of the Cross, a child of grace, and as such you will have to give account at the last Great Day."

"Threats and arguments alike fall unheeded now upon my ear, Hilary," he answered; "I am too utterly depressed in mind, too ill in body, my nerves are shattered."

It was painful to behold such a contrast in one

usually so self-possessed, so arrogantly self-sustaining. Hilary spoke to him seriously, warmly sympathising with his grief, earnestly imploring to think deeply over his future state; at the same time anxiously avoiding any expression that might grate upon the peculiar temperament, which made him ever act on the defensive, and carp and cavil at each argument in favour of the truth. His eager endeavours were to a certain extent successful, for after a time Oliver rose from his lounging position to commence restlessly pacing up and down the room. "God knows," he began, vehemently, "I would make any effort to be convinced, but I have not the power of faith. Ernest died happy, strong in the hope of being received among the Blessed. But the question naturally arises, why did he die? He, so young, so good, whose every thought I am sure was pure and guileless. The commandments even, which we learnt together, speak of long life as a blessing: 'Honour thy father and thy mother, and thy days shall be *long in the land.*' Rebellion was to him unknown, obedience the spring of all his action. Ask Uncle and Aunt Howard how fully he submitted to them, and then show me the fulfilment of the promise; even you, turn and twist the sense at your pleasure, even you, I say, cannot affirm that the covenant between God and His people has been kept."

Hilary's voice sounded low and clear in that silent room as he repeated a part of the Twenty-first Psalm. "He asked life, and Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever."

"What!" said Oliver, meditatively, "life in Heaven, and not a long life upon earth, which is the reward I always supposed attached to the promise!"

"Which proves the folly of reading isolated parts of Scripture," said Hilary, "without reference

to corresponding texts. For it is only by patient investigation into the interpretation of the Church that we can understand the comprehensive teaching of the whole Revelation."

"That is a new light," he answered. "You will be shocked at my way of handling these things, but of late years I have dealt very little with my Bible or the Church."

Few would have recognised Oliver Bayley in this last speech.

"All the promises and rewards offered to the faithful Ernest undoubtingly believed, resting upon that hope, and felt that he was entering upon a life of eternal happiness; but, for myself, I have not so much credulity; if I die to-morrow, I should not enter into life."

"Eternal life, either in heaven or in hell," was the answer, in the same low tone, reverberating like strokes on a silver bell. Hilary paused a moment, and then roused himself to action.

"Oliver, listen to me; you may not impute injustice to the Most High. At this moment you are speaking and acting very wickedly. Every throb of your heart is in opposition to your Creator, because your valued friend and companion is removed hence. I also regret him deeply, for I loved him dearly; but, Oliver, I try to raise my thoughts from Ernest in his grave, a white cold corpse, to Ernest above, received in the Church in Paradise, awaiting now, with all departed Saints, the last Great Easter Day. I commiserate your most unhappy disbelief; from my heart I pity any one so miserable, as to entertain no existing certain hope of a glorious hereafter. It is difficult for a Churchman to realise such a state of mind. How, indeed, could we lay our loved ones in the earth? or how lie down ourselves to die in peace, but for the hope contained in this most precious truth?"

"You may be able to do so," said Oliver; "to some I know this creed is natural, and demands no effort from the mind; but such is not my case, I live in a sea of doubt, perhaps to be shipwrecked finally by conflicting opinions. Ernest Howard was almost the only religious person I have not been tempted to accuse of hypocrisy."

"It is precisely your real opinions I am trying to fathom; forgive me, if I say they appear confused even to yourself. Surely, Oliver, you believe in God?"

He answered doggedly, "Yes, one must be a fool to look around on earth, and sea, and sky, and not believe in a creative power."

"As you justly observe, one must believe in GOD the FATHER, as also in GOD the SON, and in GOD the HOLY GHOST."

"The doctrine of the TRINITY," mused Oliver. "Yes. It exists in my mind more as an instinct than a definition; like all such teachings of my youth, I assent to it with my understanding; but I cannot embrace it in my heart. Certainly I do not comprehend it, neither I suppose do you?"

"No; but here is one of the Christian triumphs," said Hilary. "Faith steps in and supplies the deficiency."

"But how shall I draw the line between faith and superstition?" sharply asked the other.

"Ah! Oliver, there spake the man of this so-called 'enlightened nineteenth century.' Nothing may be taken on trust. All must be reduced to rule, so that the reasoning mind of man may grasp it; as if that finite mind could ever fathom the working of the Infinite. It is the snare of the age in which we live. It is the devil's subtle policy to advance his own kingdom."

"Yes, but Hilary, bear with me; for God knows that I am in no carping mood now"—and the un-

usually meek tone attested his sincerity—"this is assertion, not proof."

Hilary stretched out his arm to the side-table, and took up a small Bible which lay on it.

"Do you believe this to be the Word of God? Will you be answered by it? Remember, it is given to simplify all our difficulties."

Oliver drew the book from between his hands gently and reverently, as one touches a consecrated thing, exclaiming, "Ernest's little Bible in which he trusted implicitly, a rest to his soul, without doubt"—he was musing again—"it gave him victory over death, for he met the grim monster calmly, like the Saints of old, leaning apparently on some strong unseen support in that dark hour." He turned suddenly, in his old combative manner, exclaiming fiercely, "Priest, if all be not a sham, tell me; how shall I read this and be convinced?"

"By prayer," was the emphatic answer, in the same low clear voice as before; "pray for the guidance of God's HOLY SPIRIT while you read;" and Hilary laid his hand upon the other's shoulder, in the loving gentle manner which had been his wont with Ernest, bending down upon Oliver those dark lustrous eyes, whose peculiar searching gaze few could withstand; that look and action combined did more to soften the obdurate heart and bespeak the attention of this unhappy young man than any of his previous earnest appeals. "Take it, go home, and alone in your chamber, try to follow the advice I give; your prayers shall not ascend alone; that light, the light of eternal day, may come to you from the Word of God."

Both rose simultaneously. Hilary was afraid of weakening any impression he might have made if he allowed the conversation to continue; and they were moving slowly towards the door when Oliver's hand came in contact with the accordion, insepa-

rably connected with all reminiscences of that room. A strange instinct prompted him, on feeling the instrument beneath his touch, to relieve his sensitive organisation by expressing in music the predominant feeling which rose clear in his mind above the whirl and confusion of his ideas. Gradually there arose the solemn Benedictus from Mozart's Requiem, the long sustained notes filling the space around with their soft wailing lament until they burst loudly into the glorious Hosanna in Excelsis; and as in the eloquence of that deep harmony Oliver realised the spirit's flight into Paradise, his mind carried away from all its false influences, resigned itself at least for a while to the better inspirations which were really there, dormant, it is true, for the time, but capable of a speedy waking, as his friend could not but hope, while he listened to the passionate burst of music in which he expressed his feelings. Hilary stood regarding him, at first only noticing his moist eye and pale cheek; but eventually, as the thrilling cadence died away, giving place to the final swelling volume of sound, he became oblivious of all else, conscious only that he was entranced with music produced by the very highest order of genius; gifted as he had ever thought him, he never imagined Oliver could so completely have surpassed himself, for it was not only the perfection of mechanical art, but the unmistakeable expression of deep religious feeling which enchanted him, and which he felt sure could only have been shown by one who, in his inmost soul, really believed the truths he was so evidently illustrating. The last faint echo had died away some moments before he roused himself, and even then he could scarcely speak, he had been taken so thoroughly by surprise; although he well knew that Oliver was always an enigma. Hilary's unfeigned admi-

ration was not to be doubted as he exclaimed with much emotion,

"Surely, surely, you who are in possession of that wondrous gift, should be one of those who will hereafter join in the universal chant which for ever and for ever resounds through the streets of the new Jerusalem."

Oliver pressed his hand tightly over his eyes for one moment, and then strode impetuously out through the hall; his hand was on the street door, when struck by a sudden thought he returned, saying abruptly,

"I may not take this book, it was Ernest's; Aunt Howard will treasure all that was his—"

"Yes, take it, for I have a presentiment that this particular copy will be blessed to you; I shall hope to see you soon again."

He was leaving the room, opening the door rather suddenly, when he found himself face to face with Mrs. Howard.

"You have been in that room," she said tremblingly, "will you return with me? I ought to go, in your presence I shall have more courage."

They entered together, the mother looking nervously around, taking in all at a glance, so as to stamp the picture indelibly on her mind.

"It will be a comfort for us to come here now and then," said Mary, who had joined them. "I could not bear that anything belonging to him should be placed aside, as if he were altogether lost to us. If we believe in the communion of saints, we ought surely to speak of him as still living, though absent from us. I am sure it is a mistake where families refrain from mentioning their departed."

A short gasping sob was her only answer as they passed on to the bedroom.

Mrs. Howard opened his drawers, taking out all

the clothes he had been accustomed to wear, smoothing every crease, refolding what was already carefully arranged, handling them as one does a most valuable treasure ; laying them herself in the wardrobe, sprinkling every shelf with sprigs of the newly gathered lavender, protecting each garment from dust by sheets of silver paper.

At length the loving task was finished, and they returned to the other room, examining every article with many tears and many affectionate words ; as she came to the portfolio she took it up, saying, " We must sit down to the table and go through this carefully, it may contain some unexpressed directions, for your father wishes the Hospital to be commenced at once ; he will not be happy until we can visit and attend to Ernest's ' poor Incurables.' "

It was a trying ordeal, the examination of those miscellaneous papers. First a sketch of Kate's home, Marston-le-Grange, beneath a garden-seat placed under a wide-spreading tree she had written her brother's name, observing it was a cosy nook, in which he could while away his time when he should pay them a visit. Next some most untidy scraps of Oliver Bayley's ; a legend of an interview with the Wandering Jew ; a quizzical attack upon the relative success of allopathy and homœopathy, ending with a few lines of doggerel :

" If the patient live give M.D. the credit,
If the patient die say 'twas nature did it."

Then some bars of music ; a paper about the Hospital ; estimates of expenses ; various half written sentences about its religious government, upon which subject poor Ernest appeared not to have been able to make up his mind, wishing to make all as perfect as possible, yet fearing the failure of funds. All these were carefully placed, arranged by Mrs.

Howard; even Hilary's drawing formerly mentioned, and Oliver's caricature, were preserved; interspersed were extracts cut out of periodicals; and lastly, a print which had been Ernest's favourite in childhood, of the death of Abel. They looked at it long in silence, and then poor Mrs. Howard fairly gave way, and fell back in her chair sobbing; quiet tears forced their way down Mary's cheek; even Hilary's sight was perhaps less clear than usual, as he busied himself with the fastenings of the case.

He judged it better the lady should weep unheeded for a time, knowing that natural feeling will assert its right; but when the sobs had somewhat subsided, he gently took her hand, begging her to be comforted, for "Your darling is not lost, only gone before; later, when the first violence of your grief has abated, these objects which now awaken your grief will render you much consolation; as old age advances you will look forward to the joy of being welcomed to the bright home of rest by your own dear son."

She tried to calm herself. "This picture was his favourite," she said, as if apologising for her want of self-control; "many a time has he sat in my lap a tiny child, pouring out his loving heart in sympathy with good Abel, slain by naughty Cain."

"Yes," he said, "the first who paid the penalty of our common parent's disobedience was a righteous man, one who had lived a good and pure life like your Ernest. Doubtless Adam had often pondered what this punishment of death would be, which was to fall upon every human being to the end of time,—how it would affect them, and what it would be like. Now it had come, here was its first victim. He and that first weeping mother must have imagined their son had fallen into some

deep sleep, from which he would in time awake; but as the day glided past and night came on, and still he remained cold, stiff, and breathless, they in consternation and wondering sorrow must have been gradually convinced that this was the beginning of the punishment, this was the advent of the great destroyer, Death, from whose very name human nature would ever shrink. And Abel the first dweller in paradise, how must he have rejoiced as the many mansions of our FATHER's house above were filled by the countless generations who have thronged around him since the day when he welcomed the first spirit who followed him there, even to the hour when he saw the entrance of him we selfishly mourn."

The mother's tears were dried after conversing a little time in this strain; she could now contemplate with calm the inanimate objects around which spoke to her of the departed, as she restored every trifle to its usual place. Comfort had been ably imparted, for hope, our great support, had been awakened: the Christian's hope of the meeting that would know no parting evermore.

During her minute scrutiny she missed the small Bible from its place; Hilary told her who had it, relating as much of their late conversation as he deemed fit, and begging she would allow Oliver to retain that special book, which he hoped might carry with it a blessing.

She thanked him cordially for his efforts in behalf of her nephew, and indeed for his untiring attentions to them all, and together they left the rooms, of which Mary was henceforward to take charge.

CHAPTER XIV.

S. MARY'S HOME.

HILARY had closely studied Oliver's peculiar temperament, and was forced unwillingly to acknowledge how unsatisfactory and contradictory was the development of each new phase of his life. Looking on the best side there existed many seeds of good, choked it is true by thorns, and crushed by unsightly tares, but still he hoped ready to spring up when the right moment came. There was no foundation upon which to build up a character either permanently good or trustworthy, because of the want of innate truth. He was not perhaps exactly bad as the world goes, but he was bad in comparison with the standard by which we are bound to test ourselves. Impulsive and susceptible, he was capable of rising into temporary appreciation of what was good and true, as was proved by the firm hold his young cousin's beautiful character had on him; but the stream was corrupt at the source, for the want of high principle rendered him incapable of a noble and consistent life. And yet, notwithstanding the glaring inconsistencies manifested by him on every occasion, Hilary perhaps in spite of his better judgment, would not despair; sanguine expectations on his behalf had been raised, it may be unconsciously to himself, by Ernest's oft-repeated convictions that eventually Oliver would rise, and that his family would finally be proud to acknowledge him as belonging to them.

To a mind so constituted, that opposition was its darling passion, Hilary judged rightly that silence for a time would be wisdom after their late

encounter. Silence and solitude, from these combined he hoped great results by God's blessing; therefore he was very little surprised at Oliver's refusal to see him when he called a few days later on Mrs. Bayley. She made many apologies, and was evidently uneasy lest her visitor should take umbrage; but finding that he quite agreed that retirement was best suited to her son's present condition, she brightened up considerably, launching into a long disquisition upon the acuteness of his feelings, "He grieved so unceasingly for his cousin, who, although very much to be pitied and regretted, was no companion for him," adding with a touch of maternal pride, "that poor boy was so far inferior to my brilliant Oliver, that it has always been a matter of surprise to me how he maintained his unfailing ascendancy. He was a very good lad, praiseworthy and amiable, but palpably inferior both in ability and acquirements."

Hilary thought of the meek and lowly spirit above all price, which had passed from earth, and felt that truly God judges not as man. When he was taking leave a note was put into his hand, written evidently during his visit, in which Oliver thanked him for the interest he had evinced for his unworthy self, and prayed him to excuse his former rudenesses, remembering as he did with shame how often he had indulged in most unjustifiable attacks. He was trying, he said, to follow Hilary's last advice, but it was up-hill work; he had read the three Creeds carefully, endeavouring to concentrate his thoughts upon them (no easy task); he believed in all they contained, but it was like the evil spirit's belief, devoid of confidence or support. He counted upon his charity for another interview, but not yet, not until he had prepared for it; whenever he felt able Mr. S. Magna should hear from him again.

Surprised as day after day passed that Oliver should not have fulfilled this promise, and unable to discover his movements from Mr. and Mrs. Howard, Hilary, although closely pressed for time, called once more at Mrs. Bayley's, and found the house shut up. "Gone out of town until next season," was the housemaid's answer, but by others the mystery was more fully explained. On the morrow of his last visit, a friend of Oliver's from Heidelberg had unexpectedly arrived, and Hilary could not repress an exclamation of dread as Mrs. Charles proceeded to dilate upon the exquisitely fashionable foreign air and appearance of Herr Gostenhoffer, regretting the family's present withdrawal from all society, as it prevented her cultivating so distingué an acquaintance.

Possessed of this key, he could perfectly understand why he had received no note. The two young men had gone on a walking and fishing tour through Wales, and they were to make their way to Scotland, whither Mrs. Bayley had preceded them on a visit to her husband's family.

This news was a sad blow to Hilary's nascent anticipations; contrasted with Oliver's former pride of heart, the few subdued lines he had written to him seemed to denote a tone of mind born only of close self-investigation, which from one so averse, so unused to strict or searching scrutiny of his own condition, he had thought a very hopeful sign. But these hopes were struck down once more; the worst could only be expected from Oliver now, exposed to the daily companionship of an infidel scoffer, with whom he had wilfully chosen to link himself a second time, even after having once been delivered from the baneful influence of that poisoned mind. To all outward appearance he was hopelessly handed over to those three great allies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, who would soon

fasten upon him with increased tenacity. Hilary was however too faithful a servant of the God of Love ever to allow himself to despair. Outward means had failed to touch Oliver permanently, yet there remained one, more efficacious to save than all other; he would but the more earnestly wrestle in prayer on behalf of him, who had been so touchingly commended to his priestly care by the dead.

There was nothing further to detain him in town, at least not at present, for it was hardly the moment when all were oppressed with grief to force upon them the history of his own family, a painful task rendered more so by this involuntary procrastination; it would have been an immense relief to him to lay every event, thought, and feeling before the Howards, and then await their ultimatum. But there is a time for all things, says the wise man, and most assuredly that for his disclosures had not arrived.

He was quite prepared to start, when the following morning's post brought a letter from Walter Wiltonthorpe, whose calm, holy joy, was only veiled in deference to the sorrow which he knew was oppressing his friend. He announced that the church was far enough advanced for consecration; it had been built so much, so very much quicker than he could have supposed possible. There were many little things still to add, and finishing touches to be given, but the ceremony must be hastened, as Lord and Lady Wiltonthorpe were going abroad for some months, perhaps until next spring, and it could not take place during their absence. He would have preferred, of course, waiting till it was quite completed, but under the circumstances he judged it right to choose the lesser evil, as he could not make up his mind to postpone the blessings he trusted its opening would convey until after their return. He ended by expressing a wish for the *Howards'* company, but feared to ask any member

of the family just now ; he should leave the matter in Hilary's hands, who however declined broaching the subject, they had neither spirits nor health at present for visiting in a strange house. Besides, they were all absorbingly interested in the erection of a building of another sort, the Home for Incurables ; this charity from its commencement bidding fair to entail constant blessings on the family. It was an especial one at the present time, occupying the parents' attention and forcing their thoughts into an active channel.

A house had to be found in the immediate neighbourhood, and the search necessitated morning walks and evening discussions, and many interviews with builders and agents. Where purchasers are in earnest the object is sure to be forthcoming ; a suitable house was found only a stone's throw from their own ; large, commodious, and capable of addition, situated in a quiet nook, which could hardly be called a thoroughfare ; true, it was out of repair, but that was even an advantage, as it could be made to suit their own plans.

Once upon a time, long ago, it had boasted the presence of royalty, and its spacious echoing rooms were resplendent with stately company, now there was dust and mould and cobweb in every corner. This house and a piece of ground adjoining were seized upon by our friends with avidity ; soon it resounded with the noise of numerous workmen, for Mr. Howard was most impatient to witness the embodiment of his son's last expressed and favourite wish. Visits to the cemetery and thence to the stone-masons, calculations and estimates for the Home, engrossed the greater part of his time, and mercifully also the attention of himself and his wife ; so that Mary was thankfully astonished to perceive how quickly time was passing, and how little leisure there was for morbid repinings.

She had one morning been with her father to choose the papers with which the rooms were to be hung, when, upon her return, she was told that a young person had been waiting some time to see her, she had given no name, and had refused to go away, insisting that Miss Howard would rather she remained.

Much astonished Mary walked into the little book room, and recognized Betsy Dawes, who rose curtsying and blushing, much improved in looks, altogether presenting a very respectable appearance.

Mary greeted her cordially, observing it was hardly kind to have left old friends in ignorance of her condition for so long a time.

Betsy looked pleased, laughed and simpered, and with much shy confusion announced the important fact that she was "married."

Mary offered her congratulations, and hoped she was happy, concluding from her appearance she had made a good match.

"Oh, yes, Miss," said Betsy, regaining confidence with the importance of having news to communicate; "my husband is a foreigner, Carlo Luchese, that is, Miss, Charles Luchese; for what stands for Carlo in English is Charles."

Mary was duly grateful for the explanation, and presuming he was an Italian asked what was his occupation.

He modelled the white ornaments and figures so much in fashion, and she drew from beneath her shawl a large crucifix, which she presented as a specimen of his ability.

Mary examined it with rapture, it was so beautiful a copy; not simply cast and nothing more, but finished off with the utmost nicety of execution. The scroll of letters, the agonized expression given to the Divine Face, the hands and feet

perfect, with which Betsy triumphantly assured her Carlo (that is, Charles) took a great deal of pains.

Mary expressed an honest admiration, eliciting a happy, proud smile from her companion, and then begged to hear the history of their first acquaintance.

Betsy settled herself for a long story. "Miss Howard must please to remember she got a place; no, Mr. Fordholme got it for her, out by Camden Town. Well, they were rather poor people, and it was hard work; but she soon got to like them, and did not then care about bettering herself, as was at first intended.

"My mistress had a brother living at White-chapel, whose wife was very ill, and one day she said she was pretty well at her wits' end, for Mrs. Grenaway, that was her sister-in-law, was like to die, and there was no one to nurse her; my mistress could not go because of her young baby, and so I offered. Missus was glad I did, and sent me. Well, I was there, may be six weeks, until the poor thing died. Now Carlo lodged in a part of their house, and used to come now and then to inquire for his landlady, once or twice bringing in a little something he thought she might fancy, a sponge-cake, or an orange, so that's how we first became acquainted."

Mary was really interested in her story, saying she should like to know Carlo, who soon after called for his wife, and was shown in. He was an intelligent, good-looking man, a Siennese, who had come to England to make his fortune, an undertaking he found more difficult than he had anticipated; however, he gained a good living, and was likely to prosper now his English wife would smooth away many prejudices, with which, as a foreigner, he would have to contend among his own

class of people. His casts were becoming daily more and more in request, as the figures he sent into the market were better finished, and on the whole much superior to the generality; but there was a great lack of good moulds in this country; he had begun hoarding a little fund for a visit home, when he hoped to supply himself with a large stock of every variety, particularly of antique vases, which he thought he should be able to obtain, and which he was sure would sell well.

Mary at once conceived a plan in her own mind for securing him some winter occupation; but fearful of exciting fruitless expectations, she wisely forbore to mention it until it could be put in effect. During their conversation, she discovered they had been married about six weeks. Betsy would have come to let her kind friends know, but they were in such grief she would not trouble them with her affairs: finally, she asked after Kate, having heard all about her wedding, and appearing to enjoy immensely calling her my Lady, with a curtsy at every repetition of the title.

Altogether it was a cheering visit: Betsy seemed in a fair way to become a good, useful, sensible woman, satisfying all their best wishes. The punishment for her former folly, which was greater than they thought, had been most beneficial in its effects. Her old lover Tom had quite disappeared, and no doubt would not again present himself upon the scene. Her father and mother were going on much as usual, there was no great chance of improvement in that quarter. Carlo, who was remarkably steady and quiet in demeanour, totally disapproved of their manner of life, and very decidedly objected to a close intimacy between his wife and her relations, contenting himself with rendering them occasional assistance, and being civil when they met, which was not often.

Hilary's departure was a source of regret to all; he had been their great stay throughout their time of trial, ever at hand to share their grief, yet skilful in administering comfort and calm, nevertheless they were anxious that he should join his friend for an event of so much interest as the consecration. When taking leave, he rather surprised Mr. Howard by a formal request for a business interview upon his return from Fontenelle.

The merchant's undisguised astonishment was very characteristic. "Eh, what?" he exclaimed, "at all times; certainly, certainly; count upon me. Can we ever forget how deeply we are your debtors?" Hilary begged him to say nothing on that point, and Mr. Howard changed the subject to the only one upon which he could now bear to talk for any length of time.

"Did you ever hear Ernest allude to any further directions about the hospital, besides those we have already reduced to rule?"

"There was one wish of dear Ernest's I meant to have named, only it would have done equally well later. He was very anxious that all from his Home should be buried as baptized Christians ought to be, with care and solemnity. He had the greatest horror of those ignominious 'cheap funerals,' which are so demoralising in their effects and so disgraceful in a Christian land, where the Resurrection of the Dead is an article of faith, and therefore the bodies which one day shall rise glorious ought to be consigned to the earth with all respect and honour. The Burial of the Dead is rightly classed as one of the seven corporal acts of mercy, and Ernest had full confidence that those whose unforgetting love would seek to carry out all his wishes, would not fail to attend expressly to this his last request."

Charles, who was present, argued the point rather strongly.

"It is going too far, to have grand funerals from a charitable institution," he said; "it seems out of all character. Let such things be done in decent order certainly, but nothing more. For my part, I must say, the funds might be better employed for the benefit of the living, than for the dead. Such people as inhabit there ought to be buried by the parish."

This provoked a cry of opposition from every one, Mr. Howard finally closing the conversation by saying that what his boy wished should be done, only he did not quite know how to set about it,—he must consult with Mr. Fordholme and others before laying down rules.

Charles said he could not interfere, as it might perhaps be thought that he grudged the expenditure; but it was not so, for what his brother had willed he was as anxious as themselves to see carried out, it was a pleasure to execute plans which that poor boy had been so gratified in designing; but he did think it a pity to waste money in a vain show for the dead when there were so many living who required it.

Mrs. Howard quietly introduced her grandchild into the conversation in order to divert their thoughts. She had finished a long-promised scrap-book, and begged he would take it home for her. His child's name reminded him, he said, that he wished to speak to his mother, for he was very much dissatisfied with the French girl *Louissette*; he suspected that she was carrying on some under-hand game. *Julia* would not listen to a disparaging word, accused him of want of charity and injustice in mistrusting a poor young girl in a foreign land, but he chose to retain his own opinion about her. A night or two back he had strolled out to smoke a cigar; he had paused at the corner of the street when a cab passed containing a young woman in

full dress ; he distinctly observed the flash of gems both in her hair and on her hand and arm. It so happened that the road was being mended, so the cab had to wait while another vehicle passed : its occupant leaned forward at the moment, thus disclosing her face, which seemed strangely familiar, but he could not recall the name under these peculiar circumstances. Several times that night and the next day the face seen in the cab rose before him pertinaciously, and only this morning it suddenly struck him that the countenance was *Louissette's*. Mrs. Howard questioned him closely, but he still persisted in his declaration, he might not be able to convict her, but he was certain of the fact : she must have robed herself in Julia's finery, and he could not but fear that she was leagued with some very disreputable acquaintances. His wife knew all he had related, but totally discredited his recognition of her maid, refusing to allow her to be taxed with it, as Charles was desirous of doing. He had, however prevailed upon her to get rid of the girl for an hour or two and search her room and drawers. She had proved, however, too deep for them, everything was found suspiciously neat and tidy, so much so that he could hardly doubt they were arranged for inspection ; Julia's dresses and jewels were in their several places, the latter under lock and key.

Notwithstanding such fair semblance, Charles was very much dissatisfied, feeling sure of her delinquency, and annoyed with himself at being unable to prove it. His mother could only advise that the girl should be closely watched and made to account for any absence however short it might be, until Julia would permit some other course to be pursued.

Mary was sorry all this should have been related to her mother, for she knew her distrustful

anxiety regarding Louisette: this would add tenfold to her constant uneasiness, at the idea of little Fanny's being subject to such companionship.

Mary felt that it was impossible for any one to act in the present state of affairs, while her sister-in-law upheld this French girl so determinately. Any attempt at interference with her household, however delicately undertaken, and however well-intentioned, would be certain to raise a storm which might grow into a family quarrel. That must be avoided at any risk; both Mr. and Mrs. Howard had ever diligently impressed the necessity of caution in this respect on their minds, so there was nothing to be done but to trust quietly to time and close supervision to unravel the thread of deception which was silently being wound around this portion of their family.

CHAPTER XV.

CONSECRATION.

Most people have been present at a Consecration Service. Blessed be God, who has so multiplied our Churches in these latter days, there are few who have not joined heart and voice in that great solemnity. Walter's youthful dreams were at length realised. There stood the Church, built up in all its beautiful proportions. Both he and Hilary thought as they went to pay it a visit of careful inspection on the eve of the important day, that the gaze could not rest on a more lovely structure. The Bishop was to arrive early on the morrow, the service to commence at eleven; all

the Clergy of the neighbourhood had been invited, and for the most part were willing to accept, for in some way every one expected great things from Walter: the Church was universally ascribed to him, not from any wish of his, for on the contrary, he had taken unusual pains to make it understood that the erection and endowment had both been undertaken by his brother Lord Wiltonthorpe. He was, however, the Vicar of the Parish, and as his name had gone through the country, coupled with the fact of his known Catholic principles, all imagined this service would be something most unusual. They need not have been afraid, for Walter particularly disliked notoriety; the Athenian principle of worship was totally opposed to his ideas, and his one desire was to return in all things needful to the good old paths. He was simply a devout Churchman, striving to act up to his ordination vow, by which he was bound to follow the Rubric in every particular. It is a most unhappy thing that there has been so much ill-feeling shown to conscientious men in their righteous endeavours to restore the primitive discipline of the Church, a source of regret to none more than to themselves; still it could not be supposed but that Satan, against whom their efforts are directed, should find means to thwart them. It would seem, however, that the spirit of evil may have already overshot his mark. Gold is more worth refining than a baser metal; therefore, for the ultimate glory of the Church, our self-denying Clergy have to pass through a fiery ordeal in their unceasing battle with this luxurious age.

The point to be deplored is, that those invested with authority, in days happily now past, should have allowed, nay, even countenanced the laxity which has produced such evils; and our guides at the present time must strain every nerve in their

Master's work, like the twelve of old, and, like them also, subject to the contumely of this world while they labour on, thankful only that the deep sleep is passed, and that our Church is now fast arising as a "giant refreshed with slumber."

Our readers must not suppose that after the first great outbreak between Walter and his sister-in-law, all had, during this long period, gone on smoothly. There had been many a skirmish more or less vexatious, many a perverse interference, occasioning mischief it had taken hours of thought and study to rectify. Latterly, she had lavished her time and attention upon the embroidery of an Altar-cloth. It was commenced after one of those irritable fits of opposition, when, ashamed of her injustice and want of temper, the sharp edges of dispute having worn off, she had begged to be employed in some way as a token of Walter's forgiveness.

In vain he endeavoured to make her feel that he personally was not to be considered, that it was most painful to him to resist her, and that he only resorted to it in cases of extreme necessity, when her projects clashed with higher duties. She wilfully ignored any such explanation, insisting upon speaking, and acting as if her good or bad behaviour had reference only to his pleasure.

This Altar-cloth was of the most costly velvet; the design had been diligently sought and executed with care, and she had journeyed to London purposely to take lessons in Ecclesiastical Needlework, so that this gift to the Church being handed down to future generations as the handiwork of Adela, third Lady Wiltonthorpe, might be a production worthy of her reputation. But her industry had flagged, she had wearied of her undertaking, the novelty had worn off, and although frequently reminded that the Consecration was drawing near,

she had still left the frame untouched day after day, declaring she should feel quite in the humour "to-morrow;" and that unless she set to work when the fit was on her, it was next to impossible to trust to the dexterity of her fingers or the accuracy of her eye.

Poor Walter had often gone to her boudoir and removed the covering, lamenting its tardy progress, wishing he possessed the sleight of hand which alone could place the rich colours in their several forms, before the gloss had disappeared from the silks, or the velvet had lost its freshness; regretting that even a less important part of the work needful for the Church should be done in these fitful moods.

At length, in despair, he had written to the shop where it was to be made up, to know the latest time they could allow, and on the day named presented himself with the packing-case, saying it must be sent at once.

She was voluble in her apologies. "Was he quite sure it must necessarily go that day? Would not the end of the week do as well? How vexing!" She had so set her mind upon finishing every part herself. Nevertheless she must give way to a rule she had ever stringently laid down—namely, always to submit to acknowledged authority, even when it was disagreeable; as in the present case, Walter must remember this had been her unvarying custom. It was amusing to hear her arrogating to herself a virtue she so little deserved. "The shop-people," she reasoned, "would quickly set it all to rights, and they had better be cautioned to look carefully over it, as sometimes she might have left the ends unfastened, and work-girls were notoriously careless."

Although she emphatically reiterated her disappointment, she came at last to the conclusion that

it might turn out an advantage in the end, considering that Walter preferred all things executed in the first style, and those who were in the habit of such employment would naturally finish it off more expertly than she possibly could. After much talking and difficulty in collecting the various materials, and allowing them to be packed away, he could not but suspect that she was very well pleased in her heart to be rid of a task which had long since become a sore burden to her.

Similar failures must ever be the result of actions resulting from impulse only; how differently carried out are those arising from principle! She had tried him pretty much in the same way about the east window, her especial gift. She had wished the subject represented to be the Ascension of our LORD, and made a great parade of consulting Walter as to which of the houses famous for stained glass should be employed. He had named a certain firm whose ability in that wondrous art has only lately been recognised; she, on the contrary, leaned towards one whose name is more popular. Walter showed her good reasons why his recommendation should be chosen; however, when it became positively necessary to give the order, further delay being impossible, in a spirit of perversity she wrote for the person she had chosen to come to Fontenelle on a certain day, intending to issue her own commands without reference to any one; but her husband, discovering the wilful way in which she was acting, positively forbade any step being taken without his brother's sanction. Walter was sent for; but finding she adhered obstinately to her original notion, he gave way, wisely considering that on such a subject a dispute between husband and wife must be avoided.

The person who came to take the order soon discovered from her that a rival would have been

preferred, and so received all directions in a dogged sort of manner, and poor Walter returned to his Curacy, feeling that the east window, which he had loved to picture as one of the fairest gems of the whole, casting chequered rays of many hues over the tiled-pavement, the noble old oaks' leaves and branches interweaving themselves with the ever-quivering shadows, would fall far short of perfection.

And now as the friends stood opposite this unfortunate window, with every wish to find it less objectionable than they had feared, they were obliged to admit with much chagrin that even in that fading light it was worse than they had anticipated, and the one deformity of the otherwise perfect structure. For the time being there was no redress, but the effect was bad, the colouring very defective. Walter and Hilary both decided it must be altered—what it wanted, they were not learned enough to say; but one thing was certain, it would not do.

The principal figure was good and also the groupings around, but something was wrong in the border; either it was too dead for the heavy framework or the glass itself was faulty. At all events, be the reason what it might, it was a pitiable blot; any workmanship so imperfect was unfit for the decoration of God's House.

Miss Alicia Cunningham said that, "artistically, there should be a narrow rim of white to fix it in the stone, which, being imperceptible, threw up the various colours, and that this firm had, by way of improvement, discontinued the old rule, and thus caused so much dissatisfaction wherever they placed a large and important window."

Nobody could vouch for the truth of this explanation; or whether, as it was most likely, it was the ignorant vapouring of a conceited girl who

must always pretend to be better informed than her neighbours.

Lady Wiltonthorpe herself was more angry than any one, and had written a not very gentle note to Messrs. —, who declined acknowledging any just cause of complaint. "If her Ladyship wished the window taken out, or anything more done, they should be most happy to execute her commands, only it must be considered a separate order, the expense of which, if they rightly understood her note, would be about fifty pounds."

As all other parts looked so lovely, so good, and perfect, the two friends determined to dwell as little as possible upon their disappointment, and they turned with pleasure to the graceful white pillars throwing up in rich relief the sloping dark carved oaken roof; and the far clerestory windows, whose gemmed panes would they knew shed their soft grateful light from above, as yet seen only in imagination, for the evening was too far advanced to distinguish this particular beauty. There were the quaintly fashioned low open seats, the polished marbles of the pulpit, whose acquisition had cost Walter both journeying and pains; and high above all, over the rood-screen, the Christian emblem stood out in bold proportions. Old Susan's offering, the handsome font of pure Caen stone, encompassed with its appropriate baptismal text, detained them long in admiration. Walter had one regret to chequer his otherwise perfect happiness; she, his true old friend had died within the last three months, never having seen her gift completed.

The consecration was a most imposing ceremony, the effect heightened by the noble architecture around; the deep silence which reigned while the congregation waited was broken at last as the glorious sound of many voices chanting, in a burst of

praise, the twenty-fourth psalm, as the Bishop following his clergy proceeded to the altar, and the white flowing vestments quickly filled the chancel, where each one took his appointed place. Clear, strong voices, borne up by the magnificent swell of the full-toned organ, pealed through every part of the building henceforward set apart for ever, for the worship and service of God. Surely there were none present who did not join the choir from their inmost soul in the thrilling chorus "Glory be to God on High, and on earth peace; good will towards men:" even those who were there only to condemn, bowed in adoration, excited by so magnificent a song of praise.

Walter would allow of no feasting of the school children, no dinner to the tenants, no distractions on that day to draw away thoughts and attention from the solemn consecration service; he wished all, even the cottagers and their children, to remember and dwell upon a ceremony they had never joined in before, and probably never would again. He had been most anxious these last should not be excluded, as is sometimes the case, not intentionally, perhaps, but by appropriating the whole accommodation to fashionable visitors. Such gatherings should be so arranged as not to shut out the poor from their own village church. During the octave his brother might inaugurate any holiday-making he thought fit, but on this day he decided that there should be "nothing of the kind."

"Matins at eight," were his parting words in reply to a question as he left the drawing-room, closing the door as he spoke, resolutely determined to begin his new life with firm authority, and turning a deaf ear to the remonstrating voices vehemently exclaiming against the folly of attempting daily services where there was no one to attend. In London,

filled with idlers, it was only one degree less absurd, but here!—it was going too far. The few who might from curiosity come at first, would soon fall away, and then he might luxuriate in it all to himself. These and similar remarks were plentifully launched forth by Lady Wilonthorpe and some of the country neighbours, but no one thought it worth their while to attack Walter himself upon the subject. His quiet determined manner did him good service in checking flippant tongues, whose owners were sure to come off considerably the worst in the encounter.

Merrily rang out the fine peal of bells on the morrow, startling the sluggards from their dreams, rousing the villagers to wonder, the holy sounds floating on the fresh morning air far away over hill and dale, losing their last faint echo among the whisperings of the tall surging trees.

The church had been thronged the day before, people had to wedge themselves in with their neighbours oppressively close; now as the few clergymen staying in the house preceded by the choristers made their way to the stalls, there seemed only empty benches. When Walter came to the lectern to read the lessons, he could distinctly discern the persons who formed his congregation; two or three maids from the Abbey, the gardeners, some quite young children with brown faces and hair like tow, whose eyes were perfectly round with amazement, and one or two labourers on their way to work standing just within the porch door.

Lord Wilonthorpe was the only person near the chancel, and close beside one of the pillars a lady in sombre black, who alone was reading from her Bible, and whom, as they left the church, he recognized as the person who had taken a small house, little better than a cottage, near one of their lodge gates. She had lived there perhaps six months,

no one knew anything about her, and in fact it seemed doubtful to what class of society she belonged, so scrupulously did she avoid speaking to any one, appearing to shun observation in every way. She at least was making a good beginning, and Walter mentally resolved, now that it was a duty, he would lose no time in calling upon her, and trying to discover if she were in need of spiritual help or advice, as from her whole demeanour he suspected might be the case.

It is to be hoped some will be interested in the assurance that "the carriage road" and stile were both happily completed, people could swing through the latter comfortably, without inconvenience to a lady's toilette, while at the same time it answered all useful purposes. The road had engrossed much of Lord Wiltonthorpe's time and attention; he was triumphant now in its perfection; hard, firm, and broad, it challenged competition with the Roman highways, curving most scientifically from the house round by the lodge and so on to the church door. His brother affirmed that he thought his road a greater achievement than the church within the given time.

The schools and parsonage were being built, and here the Vicar had had to wage another battle. His brother could not be made to acquiesce in the necessity of Walter's living elsewhere than at the Abbey. The latter pointed out how inconsistent it would be for a country parson to reside in such a place of luxury, which though perfectly in accordance with Lord Wiltonthorpe's wealth and position, would for himself be most objectionable. To be shut in where the poor could gain no easy access, enclosed by a park and endless drive, cutting himself off as it were from his parishioners, was not to be thought of. Of course his good sense gained the day, but his brother, upon any

tempting opportunity, could never resist showing how distasteful to him the arrangement was.

Hilary prepared to bid a final adieu to Fontenelle, having seen his friend fairly started in his appointed work, both willing and able to labour hard in his parish. He had made Walter acquainted with every particular concerning himself and his family, which history we will now give in our own words, unbroken by the comments and remarks of the two friends as they talked it over in many hours of converse through the fair rural scenery, and by the restless sea, which ever, in Hilary's susceptible ears, seemed to be repeating the burden of his father's tale of misery.

They parted at last with the understanding that Hilary was to communicate with his friend when he had decided upon his nearest duty, or when any decisive arrangement should be made.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE S. MAGNA FAMILY.

THE S. Magna's were of an ancient family, and their estates were at one time amongst the richest in Ireland, but our account of them must commence at a period when a cloud overshadowed their original prosperity.

Gregory, grandfather of Hilary, died, leaving his estates overwhelmed with debt, mortgaged so far above their value, that to put his affairs into anything like order was a labour almost beyond the powers of man. He had left a will so complicated and contradictory, that far from being able to act

upon it, no one could even understand it; his own man of business had in vain taken the best opinions thereon, an explanation of one clause only rendered what followed more obscure. However, in this particular case it signified less, as there were absolutely no funds remaining, nor means of raising any: debt, decay, and ruin alone appeared as the final result of the lawyer's examination into the state of affairs.

Dennis Ilfay, who had been steward to the S. Magna's all his life, wrote in despair to a certain Mr. O'Reilly, a solicitor in Dublin, known to him as having conducted some of the many lawsuits consequent upon the family recklessness, and begged him to come down with all convenient speed, as the young Maurice, Hilary's father, was fretting himself to a skeleton about his parent's death; that there was not a shilling to be raised upon any part of the estate, adding that he, the said Dennis, was at his wits' end how to act. Philip O'Reilly was a benevolent man, and pitied the loneliness of a boy who seemed thus cast upon the world at a time of such heavy bereavement without a single relation to help him. He was a true patriot, actuated at all times by a most unselfish love for his fellow-countrymen, and always ready from the depths of his warm heart to assist an Irishman to the utmost of his power; and he felt that he could not let one of the oldest and best families in the land go to ruin, without a strong effort being made in their behalf. Accordingly he set forth at once to the home of the S. Magna's, and upon his arrival found things even worse than had been represented; creditors started up at every turn. The confusion was irremediable, and after much patient investigation and worrying anxiety the lands were finally advertised to be sold in the Encumbered Estates Court, while the kind-hearted

O'Reilly took to his home the penniless orphan, and never ceased to assure him that talent must of necessity co-exist with the pure Irish blood flowing in his veins, and that he would easily work his own way in life.

At this most trying crisis Maurice S. Magna experienced the watchful care of the good God, Who never forsakes any one of us. He was alone, solitary in mind, feeling, and habits; thrown upon the bounty of a stranger, when he could ill bear to feel himself dependent, educated as he had been in all his country's pride of lineage, deeming himself superior to any one with whom he was likely to come in contact, and disdaining almost all means of employment as beneath the dignity of his descent. Then it was when so dejectedly despondent that a relative with a willing heart and a wealthy hand, was raised up to befriend him. His father had an only brother, those two in their generation were looked upon as the last of their race, both knew in what a sea of debt they were destined to exist; for when Gregory succeeded, the family bankruptcy was an acknowledged fact, and no one but a person so indifferent and indolent as himself would under such circumstances have married a penniless girl, albeit her birth was equal to his own. She died when Maurice was just nine days old, and how her husband had contrived to live during all those years in so hopeless and unsatisfactory a manner, was a question O'Reilly tried in vain to solve.

Gerald, upon his brother's marriage, thought it high time to bestir himself and make his own way in life. Money and relatives he had none, therefore all must depend upon his own exertions; some dim ideas were floating in his brain of going out to India, or perhaps to the diamond mines of Golconda, in the other hemisphere; people had made

large fortunes in such places, he argued, and what had been done by man, man still could do.

But in the first place, he had to combat a very strong dislike to leaving Ireland, invariably summing up all cogitations upon the subject by promising himself to "see about it."

One June morning he informed Gregory that, as the weather was fine and the time of year inviting, he should make a start, and as a commencement pass over into Wales, just to see what was going on there. Apparently he found nothing very inviting in the principality, for having resided there two years, visiting first one and then another, he returned worse off than ever, and for the next ten years led his old reckless life. Then he roused himself and made another move. A neighbour, his special friend, was going to visit Cornwall, and Gerald accompanied him. At this time there was much excitement about some new mines that had been opened on speculation, and which it was feared would prove a monstrous failure, ruining all connected with them. No ore had been discovered since the first geological examination, although it was confidently affirmed by those who should know most about it, that if worked deep enough success must ensue; which declaration was considered a positive absurdity, for the company were dispirited, the funds exhausted, and serious thoughts entertained of relinquishing so deplorable an undertaking.

It was at this juncture that Gerald and his friend descended into the mine, more for amusement than aught else; on their return they heard nothing but complaints, protestations, and grumblings from all quarters. Gerald amused himself by encouraging and turning into ridicule the irascible comments of one of the partners, an active, brisk, business-like man, who inveighed in no measured terms

against his ill luck, and the swindling rogues who had induced him to invest in these mines, and finally declared he wished any one would buy up his shares in a lot for a shilling, and relieve him of his heavy liabilities, but he feared no one would be fool enough to give even that for them.

"Oh, I don't mind risking so much," said Gerald, in his careless, easy manner; "here's the last coin I have," placing it in the other's hand: "I can't well be worse off, at all events it will sound well to lament the failure of my mining speculations."

The gentleman could not resist smiling at being taken so completely *au pied de la lettre*, in spite of his annoyance, and pocketing the shilling declared he had done with the scheme altogether, that he shifted from his own shoulders to those of Gerald all the burden and the worry.

"With all the pleasure in life," said the light-hearted Irishman; "I will answer for it's not troubling me; I shall just act as my brother Gregory does in similar cases, he walks away saying, 'I'll attend to it to-morrow!' now as to-morrow never comes, neither does the anxiety."

Such logic being altogether unanswerable, they parted with a good laugh, Mr. Buckthorn wishing him joy of his bargain. Within a month a letter was forwarded to him by that gentleman reminding him of his contract, and opining that the enclosed would prove the first instalment of a series of perplexities, from whose grasp he was thankful to feel himself released; it was from the mining office, requesting his presence upon an affair of importance. Arrived there he found all concerned in the highest spirits; on the verge of despair they had quite accidentally hit upon the vein sought so fruitlessly heretofore, the ore revealed itself in abundance and of the finest quality; shares rose,

being in eager demand, and in a short time Gerald was in a fair way of realizing the long-talked of fortune.

But he was a gentleman by birth and education, incapable of appropriating the advantages which a moment's irritation had thrown in his path; therefore he came at once to London, sought out Mr. Buckthorn, informed him of every particular, and ended by proffering back again "the lot" in re-exchange for his shilling, observing that fair play was a jewel. That gentleman having a lucrative wharf to claim his attention, declined any further mining transactions, expressing himself glad to get rid of them on any terms, as he was convinced the prosperity was merely temporary, and he would not run the risk of so much vexation again, for all the silver of Peru. Riches being thus honestly his own, Gerald came out in an entirely different character, paying unremitting attention to his new business, and by his shrewdness and clever suggestions, making himself invaluable to the company.

His first care when fully persuaded of his success, was to journey back to Dublin, seek out O'Reilly, claim his nephew, and, as he said, place the family on its right footing, although he could not regain his ancestral home. Those who had bought would not sell; they had besides altered the aspect of the place, and pulled down the house to which his early affections clung; every spot was changed, he would by no means allow, improved, and he therefore ceased to desire that the estate should be restored to him.

O'Reilly was handsomely provided for, being made solicitor to the mining company. Maurice went back to Cornwall with his uncle, where he remained until he went to Oxford. Poor Gerald lost his life suddenly by an accident which occurred in the mine, near the place of his fortunate bar-

gain, and he left all his property to his nephew. O'Reilly a second time became his guardian, and acting under the instructions of the will converted all shares into money, and invested it in Maurice's name, so that upon coming of age he was the possessor of a handsome fortune.

When poor and dependent, he had ardently longed to enter the Church, for unlike most old Irish families, the S. Magna's were not Roman Catholics. At that time it seemed impossible, and when afterwards by the goodness of Almighty God this great privilege was in his power, he could scarcely believe that he might now really gratify the longing for a position which he had always considered so far beyond his reach. How many of us have felt the same; there is a something perhaps deep in our inmost heart for which we have prayed long and earnestly, it may be we think the answer as distant as ever, but if we continue with faith and constancy, and a reasonable hope that what we ask is not against the will of God, we may learn the efficacy of persevering supplication as wonderfully as S. Monica did when, in answer to her many prayers she saw her godless son become a believer in and a champion for the Catholic Faith, the great S. Augustine.

Few young students ever went to Oxford with such sanguine hopes, such high resolves as Maurice S. Magna. He was overwhelmed at receiving this great thing at God's hand; that he, who deserved so little, should become a Priest of His Holy Church, an ambassador of Him Who sent His beloved ones forth to teach all nations, a successor of those from whom the Apostolic authority has come down from hand to hand in unbroken succession. In gratitude for this great mercy, and in all the ardour of a pure self-devotion, he determined to choose the highest and most difficult path, and

to go out to labour as a missionary in heathen countries. A mission was just then starting, under the guidance of a Bishop, to plant the Church in a land which was truly one of darkness and the shadow of death, and to this noble band he determined to ally himself.

In those days of fresh, pure, unsullied youth, ere temptation with its ever fitful increasing demands had stained the brightness of his aspirations, or duty had been relinquished for the gratification of an earthly evanescent feeling, how little he believed it possible that he should ever act contrary to his profession. But alas ! for Maurice S. Magna when the day of trial came ! for he trusted to do all things in his own strength, forgetting that of himself he was helpless. Having put his hand to the plough he drew back. His ordination vow was forgotten ; sad is the record ; he was tempted, and he fell.

During his career at the University he had formed a close acquaintance with a fellow-student, who was winning, handsome, and clever, and in his opinion there was no one to compete with Herbert Wynne. They spent many vacations together, and Maurice always left his friend's family more deeply in love than ever with Huldah, the youngest daughter. They were a worldly, gay, fashionable set, completely engrossed in the vortex of pleasure ; not rich, indeed they lived in such lavish expenditure that no fortune could long stand so constant a drain unimpaired. Maurice had a general invitation, for Herbert knew how wealthy his friend was, and also that his fortune was at his own disposal ; he saw clearly his absorbing love for his sister, and considered himself fulfilling every fraternal duty in furthering her chance of a rich husband.

Huldah was beautiful beyond all description, a decided brunette ; her transparent clear olive com-

plexion was brightened by the slight rosy tint on her cheek ; her large, dark, brilliant eyes were softened and veiled by long curling lashes ; her deep red lips slightly parted by her joyous habitual smile, and her splendid black hair reflecting the light in its shining coils, so as to display its arranged luxuriant abundance.

The Wynnes knew how to make the most of every advantage, and when added to these personal graces there was a soft, low, gentle voice, "that very excellent thing in woman," it must at least be admitted that it was a strong temptation which led to Maurice's defection. If he had forced upon himself a reasoning, calm reflection, he would have discovered that the beautiful Huldah was no fit person for a Clergyman's wife. How could such an one, brought up and entangled in the net of luxury, be qualified for a position which would have required her to toil early and late among the poor, the sick, and the wretched, unmoved by indifference, undaunted by ingratitude, giving up time, society, ease, and many of the comforts of life, to succour the distressed ; cheering the penitent, humbling the profane, admonishing the evil-doer, till she forced them to listen if only in admiration of the self-sacrifice before them ?

But on the fatal day, when Maurice asked her to marry him, there was no question raised as to her fitness for such a life. Huldah loved him very dearly, but shrunk from being the parson's wife. She told him honestly that the duties and requirements of such a position were beyond her scale of perfections ; she neither could nor would relinquish the fascinations of the world ; and then the charmer exercised her power, beguiling him to give up his holy office, and to renounce at once and for ever the path of duty, even the Priestly calling !

He could do so if he would, she said ; there was

no law to prevent it; with his wealth it seemed absurd he should ever have entered the field of labour; some might even question the rectitude of such a step, for supposing he obtained a good living, would he not feel himself a selfish usurper? occupying the place a poorer man ought to fill. Had Maurice always kept in view his son's simple rule, "the nearest duty first," how many days and nights of restless anguish he might have spared himself!

At College God would have been his primary thought, and then his bosom friend would not have been a dissipated spendthrift living only for the things of time. In his sisters' society he would have felt that this woman, however lovely, was not one to brace him up to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Once step aside out of the straight and narrow path, and who shall say what will be the difficulty of regaining it?

Before his visit concluded he was Huldah's accepted lover, with the distinct understanding that he should renounce his priestly vow and devote himself to her alone. We need not trace his mental struggles: in her absence his wish to retrace the false step, in her presence his utter inability to press the point, his miserable weakness in yielding to inclination and stifling the voice of conscience, and at the last his precipitation of the fatal step that the conflict might be at an end. They were married. A union so begun was not likely to bring with it a blessing; peace and happiness could not be born of vacillation and falsehood; sooner or later self-indulgence will exact its payment, and they are happy of whom the penance is exacted in this life.

After a while, when the first charm of Huldah's companionship had worn off, Maurice became gloomy and morose. The loveliness for which he

had bartered his peace of heart seemed now a constant reproach, and Huldah found the coveted wealth as unsatisfying as the Dead Sea fruit. If we covet any earthly thing inordinately, wilfully breaking the Tenth Commandment, it is oftentimes granted, but not as the blessing we expected, rather as a curse. Huldah now had riches at her command free to spend them as she would, to steep herself in pleasures and gaieties; Maurice would have let her do as she would, she had full liberty to spend his money unchecked and without interference. But she was not a heartless woman, her faults were the result of her worldly education; she really loved her husband, and amusements unshared by him lost their charm. Even then, if he had roused himself and used his influence to lead her on to better things, he might have succeeded; but feeling how deeply he had himself erred, the power of expostulation seemed denied to him, and he sunk into a state of apathy painful to behold.

At last the time came when a child was to be added to their household. How fervently, almost frantically, he prayed God that this infant might by a holy life atone in some degree for its father's shortcomings; like little Samuel, he resolved it should be devoted from its birth to the service of God alone.

One evening he had been indulging more than usual in these melancholy reflections which had begun to tell upon his frame, unnerving him and weakening his intellect. He was that evening quite unable to join Huldah who was dining out, and after she was gone, feeling stifled and languid in the close rooms of a London house, he seized his hat and rushed into the open air, walking heedlessly through the streets, until his hasty footsteps were arrested by a few worshippers entering S. Peter's Church. He followed almost mechanically, but

once within, he joined, as he had rarely done lately, in our beautiful evensong.

There chanced to be a sermon ; in it the preacher slightly touched upon the early practice of confession, and the authority still retained in our own Church of the Priest to administer to a mind diseased. The sermon concluded, Maurice followed the white-robed procession to the sacristy, and begged for a private interview. It was accorded forthwith ; probably the Clergyman, accustomed to scan men's faces, read in his the agony of the spirit within. It was a relief beyond all expression to open his grief and pour forth the sorrows of his heart, to cast down at the foot of the Cross the heavy weight of sin which crushed him to the earth, eating, like a gangrene, into the core of his existence ; a weight which even prayer could not remove ; and especially to acknowledge having forsaken his priestly calling for his own gratification, his guilt being enhanced by his previous enthusiasm.

All his shortcomings were honestly laid bare, nothing extenuated. Mr. Reevedon was the Curate by whose judicious counsel he again experienced some portion of peace. But the relief was not to last long ; he had secretly nursed his mental wretchedness until it had seriously impaired his health. Death overtook him suddenly before his child was born, on the evening of a day when he had had a long interview with the Curate, and it was found that he had for some time been labouring under a mortal disease. Among his papers was found a sealed packet, labelled,—

“My last instructions. To remain in the care of the Rev. George Reevedon until my unborn child, if a son, shall be an ordained Priest, when this shall be given into his own hands. If my unborn child shall prove a daughter, I charge George Reevedon to open this at once, to burn all

the papers it contains penned for my son's guidance. The remaining contents to be delivered into my daughter's own hands upon her coming of age."

Thus, in the midst of confusion and distress, was Hilary hurried into the world. During his infancy, his mother lived in London, George Reevedon being ever her welcome guest and adviser; but in course of time he relinquished his Curacy, becoming Chaplain to a foreign embassy, which he undertook to renovate his overtaken strength. This, combined with other circumstances, caused him to be lost sight of by the young widow.

Mrs. S. Magna died when her child was about nine or ten years old, leaving him to the guardianship of her godfather the Dean of Crowfield, with strict injunctions that he was to be educated as a Clergyman according to his father's will. He was received at once into the old Dean's house, who remembered little of Huldah, except the fact of her surpassing beauty. Maurice he had never seen, so the boy grew up with little or no knowledge of his parents.

The general contents of this packet, so important as regarded his future career, were communicated to Hilary by Mrs. Reevedon on the occasion of his brief visit to Rowanhurst, with full directions as to her son's present residence; and these tidings, bursting upon him at a time when he was nervously endeavouring to trace the path of duty, seemed sent by God Himself to point out in what direction it lay.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CONFLICT.

So soon as he became acquainted with the foregoing facts, Hilary wrote every particular to Mary Howard. He began by confessing the deep interest she had excited in his mind, and then laid before her his father's injunctions, making her understand that he should be guided by her decision; for although there was no positive engagement between them, he knew full well that he was in honour bound to her; as one who tried to test himself by the purity of action God will assuredly require of us all, he could not answer to his conscience without forcing her as it were to sit in judgment upon him, and he plainly told her much of his past inmost thoughts, both as to motive and action.

How from the very first, when he accompanied Ernest home from the sea-side, he had admired her gentle, quiet dignity, and thoughtful self-possession; how the varying expression of her sweet face had constantly risen before him when absent from her, and how, after his visits became more frequent and he was admitted into familiar intercourse with them, that admiration deepened into esteem, and from esteem to love. She must, he felt sure, have been aware that his thoughts and hopes had been concentrated upon her. He reminded her of a certain few short weeks, when he had lived in the trust she might some day consent to be his wife. He spoke of his happiness then, when earth seemed changed from a place of trial, from a hard fighting battle-field to a land of sunny ease. At that period no doubts had entered

into his mind as to the possibility of a married Priest giving himself to his Master and his Master's work with the same zeal and devotion that he could offer out of the freedom of single life, and therefore he had not feared, as he now perhaps might, to trust himself to the great charm of her society. She knew in part the bitter breaking up of the bright visions in which he was then indulging, swept away, as they were, by the old Dean's last communication, and of his humble endeavour since to seek out and follow the right path. Then he spoke of the contest between his conscience and his devoted love—of Satan's temptations to let that written evidence of a dead parent's misery, embodied in his last long letter, rest in the obscurity into which it had fallen; and how he had struggled against the subtle suggestion, that, as it was not forthcoming at first, it was meant probably, by a merciful God, who careth for the well-being of each one of us, to perish, and leave open to him the chance of realizing a felicity rarely to be contemplated in this our life of probation. He told her humbly of his thankfulness to the ALMIGHTY, who had given him strength to resist and prostrate his whole soul in continuous, anxious prayer, till, in answer to that night's agonised cry for help, came news of the long missing packet; and concluded by saying, that when he discovered the path of life which appeared by the Omnipotent hand to be marked out for him so plainly, that he could not choose but read, he had from that moment fought hard to repress all open demonstration of his growing love. He wrote in the full conviction that she would not misinterpret his expressions, nor suppose him vain to conclude that he had really won the love of such a heart as hers; only hereafter it would be a great consolation to have made her acquainted

with every detail of the secret history in which she had borne unconsciously so great a part.

Mary had at once unhesitatingly pronounced a most unflinching decision,—they must part. Where a plain duty was so unmistakeably marked out there could not exist the shadow of a doubt as to the course to be pursued. She did not affect to deny a partiality which, under happier circumstances, might have made her life's happiness; but, as it was, she ventured to hope that both were too much in earnest, wilfully to ignore the necessity of self-sacrifice in the present instance. It was her one comfort that he had not misjudged her, or doubted that the welfare of his immortal soul would be dearer to her than his earthly happiness,—her ceaseless prayers should follow him wherever he went, and all she could say was summed up now in the last fervent wish with which she bade him "God-speed."

This was the letter which had brought him at once to London, and he arrived late in the afternoon in Harley Street. Hearing that Mrs. Howard was alone, he would not allow himself to be announced, but walked quickly up the stairs, the butler knowing him too well to think of interfering. Mother and daughter were sitting in the fading light; they had been talking of Ernest and on other subjects of deep interest. It was becoming a habit between them to sit by the fire in the twilight, opening out their thoughts to one another, and disclosing more of their inner selves than they would otherwise perhaps have had the courage to do. By degrees the remarks became fewer, the replies shorter; and after a rather long unbroken pause, Mrs. Howard became aware Mary had fallen asleep, gently resting her head on her mother's lap. She leaned over her, gazing intently the while on her features, when she became con-

scious of approaching footsteps from the inner drawing-room: supposing it was her husband or Charles, who often now looked in on his way home, she remained in the same position, merely holding up a cautioning finger that Mary might not be disturbed. The intruder came up close to them, seated himself, and only then did she notice it was Hilary. He cast a searching look at them both as he shook hands with the elder lady, observing almost for the first time the strong resemblance between them; just such a refined pure face as Mary's must have been Mrs. Howard's in her youth, only less lovely.

"My child is sadly worn and tired," she said, with a sigh; "I fear she has taxed her strength too far lately, her head was aching so badly half-an-hour ago that a few minutes' rest may refresh her."

In that subdued light, and in her deep mourning dress, he could not but perceive too plainly how pale and fragile she looked. They conversed together in hushed, low tones, which could not have disturbed the lightest slumber.

"It cannot be that grief for her brother is undermining her health?"

"No," said Mrs. Howard; "she has too sure a faith and trust in Him who has called our darling to His Home of Rest. But there may be other reasons for her suffering; there is nothing more trying than suspense."

There was the very least touch of reproach in her voice, indeed any one less deeply interested might not have detected it; but to a practised ear a slight accentuation sometimes reveals volumes. Slowly and humbly he answered,

"I cannot be astonished at any reproof your manner may infer; I have nerved myself for it, however unconsciously I may have erred. Silently

your eye convicts me of lingering here when Mary has already bade me begone; but I cannot tear myself away without a final explanation to you and Mr. Howard. That my residence among you should have caused the least shadow of pain or restraint is to me a most miserable reflection, a most unhappy return for all the kindness and consideration that has been lavished by your family on my unworthy self. I believe I am justified in assuming that Mary has no reservations in her intercourse with her parents, therefore you are aware she sent me a long letter to Fontenelle, containing the precious assurance that under different circumstances I might have had the happiness of winning her, but at the same time refusing to give me any hope now of a union, which she, in the most positive language, says would be, in our position, somewhat akin to the broken vows of my unhappy father. She ended by reminding me with gentle firmness that delay was hardly likely to facilitate the performance of a painful duty. I cannot rest on this hasty decision only, it may be you would scarcely suppose it consistent if I could. I have sought learned and discreet counsel, and my own opinion is confirmed. I know she made up her mind during those first weeks of sorrow for dear Ernest, when such a subject was not likely to be fairly considered; forgive me, if I seem presumptuous in dwelling on her own assertion as to her personal feelings in this matter. We all know how generous and unselfish her nature is. She would unhesitatingly sacrifice herself for the welfare of others, and it may be that she is doing so now; therefore I have come to you, dear Mrs. Howard, to ask your motherly advice, and to be guided by what you deem right in this most untoward trial; to-night I will give those discoloured closely-written papers into your hands and Mr. Howard's, and

then you will both be enabled to judge of my position and to discern the bearings of the case more clearly than myself. To-morrow perhaps you will impart to me the result of your investigation."

"As you justly suppose," said Mrs. Howard, "Mary has confided in me throughout; I thank God my children have no reservations from their mother. The truth is that my daughter, in her deep devotion to the Church of CHRIST, is thankful to be allowed to influence your actions in a matter which concerns your firm allegiance to our LORD. She deems it a privilege to be permitted to assist you in renouncing all you most cherish on earth at the call of your God. She has made me promise to say thus much whenever the subject should be broached between us, hoping it might not be presumptuous to think she has assisted, although in a very slight degree, in sending forth one of the LORD's anointed ones to work in His vineyard."

"If it were possible," he said, "to enhance my admiration of her unworldly character, it would but need this unflinching following out of principle, this close adherence to the high standard set up for our imitation, to increase my reverence and esteem for her. In comparison of your dear child, how faulty and weak are my own actions! Will you, however, go through the whole of these papers with her, if only as a concession to me, so that, in acting according to your judgment also, I may be spared some of the pangs almost inseparable from the retrospect of this passage of my life? And in your own reflections," he added, "sadly I would ask of you to think of me with indulgence, for I have suffered very deeply."

Who could doubt it? Not that gentle mother, marking the lines time had now traced on his sad, beautiful countenance. Down her worn cheeks

tears were silently stealing as she re-assured him of her unchanged, increased esteem and affection.

"But," she continued, gravely, "for my child's sake, this state of things must not be prolonged; to-morrow's discussion of the subject must be final; there must be no more loitering, no correspondence, action and total separation must follow at once."

He bent his head in acquiescence of her decision, bent it so low that it shaded the sleeping face before him, lower and lower drooping still, until his lips rested upon the rippled ray of light cast by the fire across her glossy brown hair. As he raised it, his tears fell on the smooth shining bands. Looking apologetically, almost appealingly, at her mother, he murmured, "Forgive me; in that kiss I bid farewell to all earthly joys; even now, as I speak, her memory lies buried in my heart, a grave no sunshine will ever reach."

It might have been the shadow from a blazing coal, which at that moment shot forth a jet of flame, for a flush of the deepest red passed suddenly over Mary's face; at all events, Mrs. Howard moved her position, and, in so doing, roused the slumberer.

"My love, how soundly you have slept. I am sure your head is better; and you see, there has been an arrival while you were in the land of dreams."

And telling her to hasten and prepare for dinner, as it was so much later than she thought, she at the same time begged Hilary to stir the fire and ring for coals; and thus made a most unusual noise and confusion while Mary escaped to her mother's room. There Mrs. Howard speedily followed her.

The poor girl sunk into a chair, with a deep convulsive sob, which burst from her inmost heart.

"Mother," she began, "I heard part; I was not asleep when he—"

"Hush, my darling," was the quick rejoinder; "compose yourself. Are you cold, love, that you shiver so? There, dear, that is well," as she made her take some restorative. "Sleeping in the day-time has made you nervous and chilly, that's all."

"Yes, that's all," was repeated, with a faint tearful smile.

"Come, love," continued Mrs. Howard; "smoothe your hair, and do not take the trouble to change your dress; sit quietly, and rest, till I am ready;" and thus gently soothing her, she gave her time to recover herself as she proceeded with her own toilette.

Mary was beginning to resume much of her usual self-command when her father's voice was heard below. Dreading to meet any but her mother's eye at this juncture, she pleaded urgently to be left alone.

"If you will only go and talk to him while he is dressing, and let me stay here until dinner is on the table, for indeed I am not feeling well."

Mrs. Howard, after one keen glance, yielded to her wishes, satisfied that it was just then the safest proceeding. They sat down to table only four, so that mercifully every topic was public property; Mr. Howard also being brimful with news which he was impatient to communicate and discuss. He had intended they should exhaust their energies in guessing his secret; but as he declared they all seemed strangely silent and out of spirits, he would indulgently impart what had so surprised himself.

"Would you believe, my love," turning to his wife, "Oliver Bayley is at this moment at Marston-le-Grange, visiting our bonnie Kate!"

"Surely not in company with that most objectionable German friend?" she answered.

"No, I do not suppose Arthur would receive such a guest. I had a few lines from him on business this morning, in which, quite at the end, he said we should all be surprised to hear Oliver had just arrived alone, the most astonishing part of the affair being the fact that Oliver and his companion must have suddenly tired of each other. They had apparently parted company when they happened to be near Marston-le-Grange. Oliver was very reserved on the subject, answering only in monosyllables any questions respecting his sudden change of plans; possibly both the friends were somewhat changed, and they did not assimilate as well as heretofore."

The evening passed away sadly and heavily. Mary retired early at her mother's instigation; when Hilary at once reverted to their late conversation, briefly telling Mr. Howard of the task his wife had kindly undertaken for the morrow, and asking for an unbiassed judgment on this painful subject. He also begged them as a token of their forgiveness, whatever might be their final determination, to permit him to see Mary alone immediately after his interview with them.

Mr. Howard was beginning a cheerful acquiescence, "Certainly, certainly, we should not think of objecting to so natural a request," when his wife interposed more gravely, and perhaps judiciously, "I am sorry to interpose a negative; but I think it will be better for those most concerned that all thought of each other should be relinquished after I have spoken to my daughter; for you see, Hilary, I do not anticipate any change in Mary's decision."

"I beseech you, dear Mrs. Howard, not to refuse me this," he urged. "Try to place yourself

in my position. Are there no reminiscences of your own early days to plead for me? Do not add to a burden so hard to bear, by persisting in this refusal. I would rather not be answered now, but go through the case first with Mr. Howard, and afterwards let me be able to remember a concession on this point, as a last crowning favour from you, to whom I already owe so much."

CHAPTER XVIII.

VICTORY.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard sat up late perusing Maurice S. Magna's long letter to his son: the wife experiencing infinite trouble in proving to her husband why its contents must be so correctly mastered by them, for he had been living on, totally unconscious of the affection which had ripened beneath his roof.

He was at first inclined to be restive and irate, and to suppose that his daughter's happiness had been trifled with; but the remembrance that Hilary was the object of displeasure, vanquished the rising indignation, for there flashed up in his defence remembrances of the considerate, loving care shown by him for their departed son, of self-forgetfulness too real to be doubted in ministering to the sick and the afflicted; and although they had discussed the matter fully the night before, still the morning found them going through the greater part of the papers again. Then when Mr. Howard finally acknowledged, however reluctantly, that Mary had done well in her decision, he still lingered arguing

pros and cons, in the vain hope of hitting upon some expedient to elude the trial of total separation, for the sake of both. That their prospects should be so blighted without either being directly to blame, was a combination of hardships his easy nature could by no means accept as a necessity.

Thus it was rather late in the day when he turned his steps towards the city, and only then did his wife seek her daughter.

"My love," she said, gravely seating herself, "I wish you to ring and give orders for the exclusion of all visitors, as I have a long painful tale to relate, which will not bear interruption, and you must give it your undivided attention."

"Notwithstanding your recent positive determination, Hilary very properly desires that I should recapitulate the whole history, and that the decision you may now give should be considered your ultimatum; what has gone before will have no weight. Doubtless you know as well as myself all his past history; his parents were certainly peculiarly selfish in leaving their only son so placed.

"It appears his birth and his father's death were almost simultaneous. His mother, the beautiful Mrs. S. Magna, as she used to be designated, was I suppose, on the whole to be pitied as much as condemned; at all events, during the early part of her widowhood she seems to have behaved really very creditably. George Reevedon, her husband's confidant and adviser, was a constant welcome visitor until he left his curacy to accept an appointment abroad; previous to his departure he had placed at the S. Magna's banker's the document intended for Hilary, with strict injunctions about its delivery. In course of time the bank failed, and the head of the house committed suicide: dishonest transactions being clearly brought home to the other partners and confidential clerk,

they decamped, destroying or carrying away with them some important papers to conceal the extent of their fraudulent transactions. This accounts for the disappearance of that packet, the restoration of which is exercising so great an influence upon you, my child. Ah! if people, when tempted to dishonesty would but foresee the widely-spread injury they inflict upon the most innocent, surely they might pause to consider the consequences of their conduct.

"But to continue. Hilary's mother at her death insisted strongly upon his being given up to the guardianship of her godfather, the old Dean of Crowfield, which so offended her brother, that he has never, in the slightest degree, noticed his nephew. There seems to have been no particular reason on her part for this urgent wish, for she was unacquainted with him, and he was apparently a most unfit person with whom to place a joyous, high-spirited child of such tender years; the only suggestion one can hazard is, that at the last she wished in some way to provide for the fulfilment of her husband's intentions concerning their boy.

"The old Dean was a widower, a book-worm, and a disappointed man; his two sons, then growing up to manhood, being among the worst specimens of the rising generation; one had been expelled ignominiously from the university, the other was nominally studying as a barrister and living a life of acknowledged vice. However, Hilary went to live in the cathedral close, and became the comfort of his old friend's declining years, showing early that aptitude for study, and facility in conquering theological difficulties, which have since rendered him so famous. Every care was of course lavished on his education; in due time he was entered at Oxford, where you know, my love, his career was one of

complete success; then followed his introduction to us through my darling's agency, and I think it one of the most graceful features in his character that he could so perfectly appreciate simple goodness and truthfulness when unaccompanied by either great learning or talent."

"Mother," interrupted Mary, "do you not perceive in that his meek humility? Walter Wiltonthorpe told me he thought him the most perfect example of a Churchman, because he possessed those two unusual qualities blended with great acquirements and greater abilities."

"That he has the power in an unusual degree, of winning and attracting eminent and good men I do not deny," answered her mother; "but his merit is not the point I wish to press upon you just now. When he first knew us, and became our constant visitor, he believed himself a free agent, and therefore was at no pains to resist the feelings of admiration and affection which it appears he has always entertained for you, content with the hope of eventually gaining your affections. To awaken him from this delusion came the summons to his guardian's death-bed, and then for the first time there burst upon him the startling conviction that his was a devoted life, that his vocation had been marked out, and that in so forcible a manner, as to thrust upon him the terrible accusation of living and acting in direct opposition to his parent's will if he followed his own wishes. You know his dismay upon this discovery better perhaps than myself, how conscientiously yet vainly he sought for the packet of instructions, which alas! when found, could too surely only effect the destruction of his anticipated happiness. At this juncture there was a pause, a breathing time in his most trying conflict. Your brother's illness became very serious; Hilary's

place at once as priest and friend was clearly beside the dying, to assist in the preparation for that last hour; and howsoever his future lot may be decided, whether here or far away, my earnest prayers will accompany him for the unselfish devotion with which he laid aside all thought of his own overwhelming difficulties for the chance of benefiting and comforting my darling boy. Latterly he and George Reevedon have exhausted every effort to regain possession of those documents, through private inquiries, by advertisements, and by offers of large rewards. Mr. Reevedon felt he had failed in the fulfilment of a sacred trust so long as their search was unsuccessful. And at last Hilary has obtained his unhappy father's commands.

"The whole is embodied in a few words, briefly requiring of him that he should become a missionary, and that he should choose for the scene of his labours the most difficult and dangerous post. Mr. S. Magna urged upon him the accomplishment of this in what appears to have been a paroxysm of remorse of conscience, as if he felt that the devotion of the son could alone repair the delinquencies of the father, and that those sins, whose avenging remembrance lay so remorsefully on his spirit might be condoned by giving 'his first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sins of his soul.'

"After due reflection, Hilary felt that there was but one course to pursue, and that was to lay before his Bishop and confess to him all the doubts, difficulties, intricacies, cares and sorrows consequent upon this painful discovery. He has done so, and the result is, that with you the decision rests. My child, it is a heavy burden to throw upon you, and one I naturally resented, but he with his pleading look and voice reminded me that if we

take so solemn a course as that of true confession we may not further choose, but must abide by the advice given by our appointed guide. Still, Mary, I do not see that you are bound to render both your lives miserable for the overstrained injunctions of one who perhaps thought to shift from himself the responsibility of his own shortcomings upon an unborn child."

Mrs. Howard paused pointedly and inquiringly upon observing somewhat of a perplexed expression settling itself upon her daughter's attentive face.

"Mother, dear," she said, "Hilary could not have thought it necessary that you should tell me all this again, because I have known it all along, as the history developed itself by degrees, and as each fresh disclosure took place."

"True, my love, but I can understand and appreciate his motive. He must feel that he has all but engaged your affections, and that so far as he is able now, he should give you every opportunity of testing yourself, and of proving to your own satisfaction whether or not a decision should be final which was pronounced upon the first moment of excitement. I can say what he could not, that if there must be a sacrifice he should be the one to make it. Having so far won your love, my child, he is not justified in casting it aside because of an anterior duty, of which he was ignorant it is true, but which should not now be considered as equal to your claim."

"Hush, dear mother, it is but useless pain to exhibit the picture on this side. Hilary knows what my answer will be; I have never added to his difficulties by affecting to disguise my feelings towards him, it would have been alike beneath my dignity and unworthy of his affection."

"He acknowledges your candour and truthful-

ness, but wishes, we all wish you, to reflect advisedly upon the case; and remember," added her mother impressively, "you are about to choose for all your life, once done there will be no recall."

Both sat silent for a time, Mary's face being slightly turned aside and completely shaded by her hand, at length she spoke slowly, earnestly, gravely.

"I should have profited very little by the loving tender care lavished upon me, or by your and my father's good example from my childhood, if I were not capable of some sacrifice where I know my duty to my God exacts it. Hilary must choose the highest life. I would not clog his steps upon that upward path for all the joy that earth can give; and though my heart bleeds to think that he must suffer, yet I know it is but for a little while, and the heavier his cross the brighter will be his crown. Do you not know, mother, that love, in the highest acceptance of the term, is the gift of self? that to renounce all personal feeling forms the happiness of true affection? I am sure, looking at the matter soberly and practically, as you would wish me to do, you must feel that my course is the best. Supposing I were to waver, to indulge myself and give way as you seem to think would be for my ultimate advantage, we both know that Hilary would at once acquiesce, but do we not also know the pain it would cost him, the disappointment which would necessarily arise, when the conviction was forced upon him that she whom he had singled out was unworthy of his regard, incapable of acting up to the high standard set forth for our imitation. And then, if we carry ourselves further on into future years, all these ideas which might perhaps now be stifled and kept down beneath the surface, must rise up

to torment him when the romance began to wear away ; the bitter remembrance that he had in any degree fallen from his high vocation, and chosen his good things in this life, producing it may be similar results to his father's case, doubt, indecision, anxiety, unpitying remorse, the constant perplexity undermining both mind and body. Ah ! no, my mother, in what I have done I feel most strongly that I am right. If it be needful to say anything more to Hilary, tell him I have not a moment's doubt as to our duty, and that the recapitulation which he and you have so needlessly insisted upon has but strengthened my former resolve ; henceforward I look upon him as vowed to a missionary life, and for the last time I bid him God speed."

Rising as she finished the sentence, and kneeling at her mother's feet, she hid her face in her lap.

"Then am I to understand," said Mrs. Howard, "that you have already bid him farewell ? or that you would prefer not doing so ?"

Mary's head was raised on the instant.

"I had thought of asking you if I could be allowed to speak to him once more ?"

"Hilary is in the drawing-room, my love, awaiting one last interview with you, to which we have consented. Go, dearest, and God bless you," added her mother, kissing her flushed and aching forehead.

CHAPTER XIX.

LAST WORDS.

"HILARY, you are to go!"

A gentle voice giving utterance to these few words broke the silence as he stood on the hearth-rug, nerving himself for the coming trial. So habitual was his self-restraint, a mere superficial observer would hardly have guessed the chaos of feeling these words aroused within him, except that he grew very pale, and his lips slightly quivered, he might have been thought sternly unmoved.

Mary had entered noiselessly through the folding doors, and was standing near him, her truthful brown eyes raised unwaveringly to his face declaring unmistakeably the perfect faith in him which had never failed.

"Hilary, you are to go!"

How the echo of these words came back to him in after years when he was toiling alone and suffering in a distant land, where the sound of the sweet English tongue never reached. He turned quickly as she spoke, and then stood rooted to the spot, for in her presence his outward calmness fled. Oliver Bayley would little have complained now that nothing ever moved the smooth, easy elegance of his manner. She seated herself in a chair which stood near, perhaps to steady her trembling limbs, perhaps that she might shade her face from the unwelcome light.

"Mary," he began, "I had hoped—"

And there was another long pause; his intense emotion was painfully thrusting back his words;

presently he tried again, taking up the thread on another side.

"I believe you know I have been the whole morning with your mother and father."

"Yes," she interrupted, "and all things are in the course of arrangement; soon you will leave, never to return. Hilary, why did you suppose I could alter my decision? I am here to renew my former determination. You should not have doubted me."

"I did not doubt that you would act as a true child of God," he answered, in a low tone. "I asked for this interview, because it would be unjust to you and to myself to depart without telling you the whole truth of my life since I have had the great happiness of knowing you. Before I knew you, or lived in daily intercourse with your family, I had had little knowledge of women. Men who think only of study, passing the greater part of their lives in college, mix so rarely in ladies' society, as to forget alike its temptations and its charms. Earlier in life, you know, I was singularly bereft of female influence; therefore when dear Ernest and I first became intimate, through your parents' kindness, and I was allowed almost to become one of the family, there opened out before me a vista of social enjoyments, such as I had never conceived before. From the first, Mary, from the very first, you must instinctively have felt that in my eyes you were endowed with every grace a woman should possess. Mary, I could not set out upon my distant mission without this last farewell. I wished openly to express the deep reverence I feel for you, as well as the undying love that I shall ever bear you. Your own act, confirming the higher counsel I have already received, has convinced me that the pleasant paths of this world lie far aloof from the stony road along which

I must bear the cross it is my MASTER's good pleasure to lay upon me. I must gird on my armour now with all strength, and commence in earnest the battle of life, knowing that the sweet and blissful feelings which cluster round a settled home are not for me. I have tried hard to stifle the overwhelming thoughts of all you might have been to me; but in these last moments, when we are about to part, never perhaps to meet again till this world shall have passed away, all artificial barriers must be thrown down, and you must not shrink from hearing once for all that the call of my God alone could have torn me from you, who are, and ever shall be, my one and only love."

He ceased, and no sound broke the stillness save a low sob from the bowed figure beside him. When he resumed it was in a humble subdued tone, contrasting strangely with his former excitement.

"Now I wait but to hear that my presumption is pardoned, that your kind feeling towards me will not be withdrawn, that you will still let me be to you at least a friend whose memory will linger with you through the events of time."

Tremblingly sweet fell upon his ear the few words uttered in her musical voice, assuring him that it was only in her unchanging faithfulness to his memory the necessity of forgiveness lay. She did not shrink from telling him that the heart which had once been his should never be given to another. He had raised and ennobled her, by deeming her deserving of his love; he who was himself found worthy to labour, as did the chosen disciples of our Blessed LORD.

"Oh, Hilary," she continued, falteringly, "we may never meet again on earth; but I will pray unceasingly that GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT may uphold you and direct your path, that His blessing may

accompany your endeavours to plant His Church in that unknown land of danger, and that the sacrifice of our mutual affection in obedience to the dead may be mercifully accepted by Him who judges both will and deed."

The last few words were scarcely audible. She tried to steady her trembling voice, but the effort was unsuccessful; it shook visibly, belying the self-possession she strove hard to maintain. He felt that for her sake, as well as his own, the parting must not be delayed. He took her cold hand in his; both rose simultaneously, that moment of mute agony had come; there was one long sorrowing gaze of each into the other's face as a silent farewell closed their happy intercourse on this side of the grave. There was one last embrace, one deep sob, and he was gone.

Mary sank back on the ottoman sick and faint; but the sound of the hall-door closing violently, the clatter of his horse's feet, as he galloped away, aroused her, restoring consciousness, and with it the overpowering conviction that all was over.

Yea, all the fluttering hopes, wishes, doubts, and speculations of the sweet spring-time of life were crushed and destroyed for ever. Henceforth all thoughts of love and marriage should be strangers in her heart, utterly and entirely passed away. As well try to raise a flame from the dead ashes of a spent fire, as to induce again even the lingering remnant of such feelings in one so truthful and high-toned as Mary Howard. That he had loved her, she, with a womanly perception, had always felt, possibly before he was aware of the existence of that sentiment himself; but the certainty that he would love her, and her alone, while life endured, was the one ray of earthly light still lingering round her. She needed some at this gloomy moment, for bright as was the distant

heaven, the mortal life appeared but one heavy sorrowful blank.

He had loved her! and love had succumbed only at the call of his GOD! there lay her comfort for this world,—for the next she had the blessed thought that she had been permitted to offer up her dearest earthly affection to her LORD, Whose ineffable love, were it known to her but one moment only, could give in that instant joy so far above all that human heart could dream.

Mrs. Howard had remained in anxious misery all this time, understanding but too well the love they bore each other, and knowing the cost at which it must be rooted out. Hearing Mary's fleet steps ascending the staircase, she impulsively advanced to sympathise and console; but the rushing feet lingered not at that landing, on they went, nor paused at all, until the sharp turning of the key in the lock told impressively that at this moment she could endure no presence save only the One, All-Merciful to judge, and Omnipotent to uphold.

The mother sat down again; she would not presume to intrude on such a grief. To be alone for a time was but a natural desire, and on the whole safer and better for her. Had it been her own case she could but acknowledge it would have been an imperative necessity. She had not long to endure her probation of nervous solitude, for but a short space elapsed before Mary sought her. Ah! how sadly fell upon her ear the slow measured footstep from which all elasticity had fled. Without a word she drew her child to her loving heart, and kissed her throbbing forehead, anxiously remarking how raven-black looked the heavy masses of her soft brown hair in contrast with the extreme paleness of her face, a pallor which never even in after years entirely passed away, and which always

remains wherever a severe hard struggle has been waged, arising, as it does, from the victory over the natural will, where life's evanescent dreams have been given up for a higher service.

Perhaps it was well for both that they were somewhat hastily startled from that endearing fond embrace by a carriage dashing up to the door, a reverberating double knock, and a peal of bells, with a bustle and confusion below ; in short all the hurry and excitement of a great arrival ; almost before they had time to ask the cause of such unusual commotion Kate burst into the room radiant in health and good looks, laughing and talking, and too joyous at their unexpected re-union to observe the depression which would otherwise have been so apparent.

To account for her sudden appearance, it will be necessary to go back to a conversation between herself and her husband a few days previous.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SISTERS.

SOME land, contiguous to Marston-le-Grange, was about to be disposed of, meadows and fields upon whose rich pastures and verdant extent Arthur had looked for some time with a longing eye. In the course of negotiation he found a personal interview between the contracting parties indispensable, and the present proprietor being neither able nor willing to come to England to arrange the sale, a journey to Paris became for him a necessity ; Kate was of course to go with

him, and they discussed the feasibility of combining business with pleasure, and compensating to themselves for a former disappointment by pushing on to Rome for the winter months.

Kate slily reminded Arthur of all the formidable amount of work he had planned out upon his estate to be executed during the bad weather; also she adverted more gravely to their several duties which seemed to demand their continuance at home.

"Nay, Kate, my dearest," answered Sir Arthur, "I would not propose anything you could possibly call inconsistent, but I am sure I am in the right, a change of scene and society will do you all the good in the world. You have been so overtried, this great grief of Ernest's death has followed so closely upon your leaving them all, that it is natural your health should suffer, and I am only acting with common caution in advocating change. Nay, love, why shake your head so despondingly? for once I must act the tyrant, and insist upon your acquiescence. I wonder," he continued, contemplating her musingly for some moments, "whether it would be a wise thing, fair lady, to give you a peep behind the scenes, withdraw the tapestry a little, and let you see the extent of your power over me. But, however that may be, I cannot keep even a doubtful secret, so I had better place myself at ease and tell the whole truth. Know then that I consulted Dr. Brereton the last time I ran up to town, who agrees with me entirely, and says a few weeks abroad is precisely the best thing I could possibly hit upon, and that it will be of the greatest advantage and benefit to you."

Kate laughed merrily, declaring that he was the most absurd bungler at deception she had ever known. She had been awaiting for this admission, feeling convinced from the moment of his return that he was labouring under a troubled conscience,

and then having enjoyed triumphantly his futile attempts at self-defence, she went on seriously discussing the subject in all its bearings with wisdom and good sense.

"I am very grateful to you, dearest Arthur, for your solicitude and care. It is true I have all my life, almost passionately wished to behold other lands, not, you know, for the sake of flitting through a country merely that I might boast of having seen its novelties, but to wander on classic ground, myself to stand on those very places held sacred throughout Christendom, because of the sufferings and death of the early Martyrs, that band of Saints whose one aim was God's love, their one law His will, and to try by meditating on the landmarks of their lives, even at this distance of time, to realise, as they did, the one chief object of our lives on earth; to haunt at pleasure spots from whence sprung great thoughts and greater actions, to gaze upon all that is exquisite in art, to live for a time in a splendid climate of brilliant sunshine and pure soft air, this, and more than I can enumerate, would be, I feel, immense enjoyment at the proper time; but, dear Arthur, that time is certainly not the present; for you must admit the extreme selfishness I should display in leaving my father and mother and dear Mary at home in their great grief, to uphold and console each other as best they can, while I, in utter disregard of their claim upon my energy and spirits, go forth in all the pride and prestige of my wedded happiness to the novelty and exhilaration of foreign scenes and pleasures. I should object less if even Mary could join us, but that is out of the question. We might perhaps suggest the idea, and by urging it strongly induce them to follow us there. What do you think?" and she looked up eagerly, as she hit upon a way out of the dilemma.

"That great geniuses jump at the same conclusions," answered her husband, "I have already used my utmost eloquence to gain so desirable an end, but in vain; your father shakes his head, and says he has work to do for the next month or two, which he could in nowise neglect. Mrs. Howard, in her decisive manner, negatives the project, thanking me for this, and as she is pleased to say many other proofs of my affectionate consideration of them, but it is their great comfort to remain stationary just now."

"I was oblivious for the moment," said Kate, "of their one engrossing occupation; of course they are organising dear Ernest's Hospital; only instead of the unpretending Home he had conceived, my father has doubled the sum originally intended for its endowment, so that it may be the sooner at work in full force; they are hurrying on the arrangements as fast as possible in order to have it completed and inhabited before Hilary's departure. By the way, speaking of him reminds me of another matter about which I want to have a long talk with you. The official looking document, whose voluminous size you remarked upon this morning, was a very long letter from Mary, containing much of her proceedings lately. Now I cannot satisfactorily decide whether Hilary is acting rightly or not, his position is one of extreme difficulty; I am convinced he deeply loves Mary, and yet he has decided at whatever personal sacrifice to obey his father's desires. Now it could scarcely be reasonably expected of him, that he should renounce all happiness in this world for what in fact seems a morbidly selfish exaction on the part of his father; and even granting this view of the case, I am not sure that he is acting justly by Mary—her future, at least, should not be clouded because he has an overstrained

fantastic sentiment of what is due to the wishes of the dead."

"On that point," observed Arthur, "no one but Mary has a right to decide, she alone can give the casting vote. Hilary has of course no reservations with her on that subject, and whatsoever may be the relative position of those two, whether there has existed an absolute engagement, or whether they have only been on the eve of it, we know them both sufficiently well to be certain that both will put aside all selfishness and act up to their principles, for they are both as perfect characters as one ever meets with here below."

"It really seems throwing himself away," continued Kate, "when one reflects upon his talents and on the honours he gained at Oxford; surely a less learned man would do well enough to go and preach to those illiterate heathens who are totally unable to appreciate or even discern great acquirements."

"There, Kate, you are wrong," said her husband; "the cleverest and best are precisely those who will make their way where men less highly gifted would fail. Hilary by his learning, energy, and piety, and still more with his tact, so indispensable where any great work is to be effected, is just the man who ought to give up every comfort of life, country, friends, and ease, to bear the glad tidings of great joy to those for whom his Master died no less than for himself. I, for one, shall bitterly regret his departure, although our loss will doubtless be his gain; no one could be his intimate associate without feeling that he is destined for one of the high and difficult paths of life."

"I suppose," said Kate, "you are mentally elevating him to the rank of a Colonial Bishop?"

"No," answered Arthur, "in his unostentatious efforts to fulfil his appointed task he is the very

not to refuse all honours and power: we may not know most probably shall never hear of the influence he may exercise, of the souls he may win, or the sufferings he may undergo in his own person: he will be one of those Saints whom God alone canonizes.—UNKNOWN TO fame, no high-sounding deeds may be coupled with his name, no earthly rewards be his. But, Kate, his glory will be great hereafter."

"Mary speaks of his ultimate departure as a settled thing, although I myself should doubt its coming to pass. Have you any idea where he would go?"

"Not the slightest," said Arthur: "I have had no intimation on the subject from himself or any other: I certainly did try to ascertain Walter Whittonthorpe's opinion, but gave up the attempt in despair, he is impenetrable."

"How very odd is it not, Arthur?" mused Kate, "during our whole lives Mary and I never had a secret that we did not share, and yet, do you know, I cannot at all define her feelings with regard to him. I am sure she likes him very much, and yet to read her determined measured observations upon his future movements no one would believe that she had the least interest in them. Do you know, I think I must be particularly dull at reading character, or detecting springs of action; I am sure she is far from practising intentional concealment, for all my questions are answered at once unhesitatingly: but, for all that, the mystery still lies *perdu* for me beneath that calm serenity. Is it not stupid of me, dearest, that gazing into a clear pellucid stream I cannot count the glittering pebbles under the current?"

"My little wife is indulging in a leaf of metaphysics," he answered, "torn from Oliver Bayley's

"How quick you are, Arthur," she said admiringly; "as you have only known us for the last three years I should hardly have thought you would have discovered that love history, therein lies the secret of all the hidden dislike and rudeness of Oliver to Hilary. But Mary never cared for him since she understood the feelings he entertained for her: as children they were what we term little lovers, he was her shadow, always ready to do battle for her sake, and from then until now I verily believe he has loved her; but I am thankful it is on his side only, as he is in no way calculated to be entrusted with the happiness of my gentle, quiet sister. Mary is of so peculiar a temperament, so much older than her years, so unlike other girls, and Hilary, with his grave, stately manner, like an old grandee of Spain, would so well have suited her. Dear Mary! If he goes, where shall we ever find her a fitting husband?"

"You had better avoid such speculations, and let events follow in their natural course, my love," said her husband; "we should go about our daily avocations with a more tranquil spirit, if only we realized the good Providence ever watching over us. But homilies are not exactly my forte," he added, rising from the couch where they were sitting, "and I must leave your society for that of the bailiff just now. So Kate, think well over the continental trip, and remember we cannot start too soon, for I am impatient to conclude my bargain, and the change will do you good."

The young wife feared she had proved but a dull companion during these few months of her married life, for her brother's death had cast a lengthened shadow upon her affectionate heart, and therefore, although it cost her an effort, she made up her mind that she ought to accompany

her husband to Paris, reserving her decision, upon their future movements until she was better informed concerning the progress of events at home.

All necessary arrangements were quickly effected for a few weeks' stay in the gay French capital, and within a very short space they were conveyed to Harley Street, where they arrived, as we have seen, most opportunely. Kate's presence, throwing the sunny brightness of her own light heart upon every passing event was so cheering, that Mrs. Howard hoped it might have the effect of dispelling Mary's sadness, or that at least her thoughts, just at this trying time, might be diverted from the one painful subject on which they were concentrated.

The sisters were alone: Kate had been relating everything that had befallen her from the time of their separation, ending with,

"And so, dear, you see I am to go amusing myself in the gayest city of Europe, leaving you alone to battle through our great home grief."

"Not so," said Mary, "the first bitterness of our loss is already wearing off, and even my father can bear now to talk of Ernest composedly; he is never so gratified as when we remember some half-expressed wish uttered by him about the hospital. Hilary's arrangements too take up a good deal of his time and distract his attention, for which I am very thankful; for as he contemplates spending the remainder of his life abroad, he has much business to transact about his property."

"What!" said Kate, wonderingly, "is he rich? I never thought anything about that."

"I believe he possesses about a thousand a year."

"So much!" exclaimed Kate; "why a very small portion will be sufficient for his wants in a

savage land. What a pity the surplus should not belong to some poor country parson, a Mr. Quiverfall, for instance."

"Do not joke upon that subject, dear," said Mary, "I do not think I can bear it."

"My darling sister," quickly interposed her warm-hearted companion, throwing her arms around her, "you are feeling all this very deeply. Are you quite sure you and Hilary are not walking on stilts, and in your enthusiasm allowing your whole life's happiness to elude your grasp, catching at the shadow for the substance? At the present time I do not consider you a fair judge of what your future life may be, viewing all things as you do now through the medium of a great sorrow."

Mary looked steadily into Kate's eyes as she answered,

"Dear sister, I am happier and stronger, more settled and more at rest since Hilary's work has been definitely confirmed than I have been for a long time. It is not every one, you know, who are permitted to offer themselves up so entirely for the work of CHRIST and His Church. Shall I give unto the LORD of that which costs me nothing? The same proofs of obedience are not exacted from each one; but if the sacrifice of my deepest affections is required of me, shall I withhold it to the peril of my soul? No, Kate; thinking and feeling as I do, there is but one straight narrow line of duty. Mother and Hilary and I have talked it over carefully, and I am satisfied that we are acting righteously; he has honoured me by placing the decision of his plans in my hands, and, Kate, it is my ultimatum that has sent him forth, so I have for my comfort the consciousness that I have helped, although in a subordinate degree, in adding an-

other name to the long list of the Church's Confessors, for such I love to think we may consider Hilary. You can hardly conceive," she continued, "how much the preparations for his departure have occupied our parents, and it is a great blessing that it has been so, for it is very true that one grief neutralizes another. My father's excellent business habits have been of immense use in the disposal of Hilary's fortune. He very much wished to devote a portion of his wealth to the benefit of his native land, and he has therefore divided it equally, as of course funds are as much needed in the missions there as here."

"But," interrupted Kate, "you have not told me to what part of the globe he intends going."

"His destination will not be his own choice; he has offered himself wherever there is work to be done, and wherever a devoted heart and a clever head is most needed, thither he will be sent."

"How has he disposed of his wealth?" asked Kate abruptly.

"Five hundred pounds is given to dear Ernest's Home, as a sort of surplus fund for any luxuries or comforts that may be required when it is once set on foot. Hilary said, although my father had endowed it so liberally, and as he thought foreseen all requirements, still in the end, in similar cases there was almost always something that had been overlooked; he begged so hard for permission to contribute that he was allowed to have his wish, as I told my mother it would have been cruel to have refused when we all know his interest in the Hospital, in point of fact his words gave birth to the idea. There is a donation of three hundred pounds to the choir of the Holy Angels, and a large sum has been bestowed upon some Oxford endowments, at least to some fund belonging to his college, I don't quite understand what, but I know that he has

reduced his income to about five hundred pounds a year, which is eventually to belong to whatever missions he may join."

"I would not for a moment question his excellence," said Kate, "nevertheless he may err in judgment, and I am not certain but that such may be the case."

Mary answered by an arch smile and a kiss.

"You have so lately entered the married state, Lady Musgrave, that you naturally think there is no bliss comparable to that of a 'loved and loving wife.' But seriously, Kate, dear, there is one thing I want you to do; I know my mother shrinks from it nervously, and I think for various reasons you could accomplish it better than any one else. I mean the disclosure to Julia that I have refused Hilary, and that he has bid us a final farewell previously to his departure, which takes place within a week or two."

Kate looked round in utter astonishment: had affairs then progressed so rapidly? She knew all this was under discussion, but she had not at all understood that movements so decided had been positively determined upon.

"Will you speak to Julia, Kate, dear?" urged Mary, after pausing for a time; "it will be such a relief, I so dread her cold cutting observations, and you know you can broach the subject in your own way."

Kate assented rather absently, asking what had brought things to this sudden climax, begging her sister to detail events since her long letter, which certainly had not sufficiently prepared her for this last decision.

But resolute of will and strong of purpose as Mary was, the trials of that day were of too recent occurrence to bear probing even by her beloved sister; and Kate seeing by her unusual hesitation

that the details of the sacrifice must for the time be sacred, kindly forbore to press the subject.

The week Sir Arthur had decided upon staying in London soon passed away, sad and tearful farewells closed it, especially the parting with Hilary, for the Musgraves felt they should see his face no more; they had ferreted him out in lodgings close to the docks, where he had established himself to facilitate the preparations for his long voyage. Hearty and sincere were the good wishes interchanged, and as they exchanged the last lingering words Hilary slid on Kate's finger a splendid diamond ring, begging she would wear it constantly in memory of their pleasant companionship: poor Kate found herself in an awkward position; a glance told her the ring was of great value, and delicacy made her shrink from its acceptance, but he seeing her about to remonstrate, so adroitly urged his point that it would have been ungracious to refuse a souvenir so kindly proffered.

Gathering fresh courage, she was about to implore of him a reconsideration of his plans, when Arthur cut short what was to all so painful a scene, and poor Kate had hardly recovered from the tears and sobs consequent upon this painful parting when she found herself tossing about in the Boulogne packet, too miserably sea-sick to entertain another thought either for herself or any one else.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SISTER OF CHARITY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the confusion in which she had passed the short time previous to her trip to Paris, Kate had seized upon the first suitable occasion that presented itself to unburden her mind of Mary's anxious commission; not that she supposed for one moment that Julia could be in ignorance of what was passing around; living, as she did, in daily habits of intercourse with the Howards, it was not probable that she was less well-informed of the events passing in their home as of those which took place in her own; but Mrs. Charles, from her first inauguration into her position amongst them, had established certain rules of ceremony, to be acted upon by all members of her husband's family, and extorted their fulfilment with the most rigorous exactitude. It was her invariable custom to feign ignorance of any subject under discussion until the same had been formally notified to her together with every detail or contingency connected with it, therefore Kate knew very well the extreme surprise she chose to evince on the present occasion was altogether assumed. As the interview proceeded she could not but felicitate herself upon its being in her newly-acquired matronly character that she had incurred the torrent of words which Julia poured forth with such heated indignation, as past scenes were sufficiently vivid to bring with their remembrance the conviction, that the guard on her temper, shown in the sudden effort with which she checked her violent tirade, was due only to her position as Arthur's wife. Had she been still but simple Kate Howard,

her task would have been one of much greater difficulty ; as it was, she breathed more freely when the first whirlwind of anger had swept away the force of the tempest, and there only remained the skirmishing of words and opinions which were comparatively easy to combat. She sat listening to her sister-in-law's contemptuous sarcasms upon credulity and fanaticism with a heightened colour, it is true, but also with a silent tongue, having determined for the sake of all, that the communication should pass over as quietly as was possible.

At length, however, having pretty nearly exhausted a vocabulary, certainly sufficiently eloquent, Julia condescended to a straightforward questioning, which was the point for which Kate had undertaken the task, her ready wit and keen perception warding off from her mother and sister much future annoyance, and restraining the cold, analytical, inquisitive prying into thoughts and feelings for which Julia was famous, and which at times rendered her remarks so offensive.

"Upon my word," she began, after a pause, accompanied by her usual habit of tossing back her head, "as you all seem to have taken leave of your senses, I think it is high time for Charles to interpose and bring a little common sense into the argument ; indeed, I shall insist upon his taking his proper stand and asserting his right of exercising the authority which should be conceded to him as an eldest son, whose judgment ought to be respected. I am well convinced he will quickly put a stop to all this absurdity."

"Excuse me, Julia," said Kate, "I do not mean any disrespect to my brother ; but neither he nor you will have power to settle the matter in that summary manner ; it is one in which high and holy instincts and purposes are involved, such as

some people cannot even understand, much less act upon. Those whom it concerns are not likely to admit of any interference. Mary is old enough to judge for herself, and endowed with wisdom far beyond her years. My parents also have sanctioned the course of events from the beginning; there can therefore be certainly no pretence for meddling now. I was deputed to convey to you a decision," continued Kate, emphasizing her words, "not to ask for advice."

Mrs. Charles threw herself back in her chair, bursting with indignant wrath, which in a few moments found vent.

"That any one, not a confirmed idiot, should be guilty of such unmeaning nonsense, I could not have believed; and you are almost equally to be censured, Kate, for encouraging and abetting her in it. How she can conscientiously tamper thus with her peace of mind is inconceivable, wilfully flinging away her happiness, as if it were of no more consequence than the floating thistledown, vanishing with a breath. Once heedlessly cast aside, she cannot expect to find it within her reach again; and then what a life of disappointment to contemplate, ending, as it certainly will, by her sinking into a peevish ill-natured old maid. It is shocking to think of."

"Now Julia," said Kate, "you are arguing in extremes; one must smile at such a picture of Mary; I, for one, do not see why an old maid, as you are pleased to term an unmarried woman, should be considered so deplorable; perhaps those who choose a single life may be happier than many a married couple as unions go now-a-days. Besides, you talk as if happiness should be our first aim, the object for which life is given us, whereas it is but an accessory; we are not placed here for the sole purpose of seeking it as the great busi-

ness in life. If it come, well and good, we should enjoy, cherish, and make much of so precious a gift from the Merciful God. But if we go out of our path of duty to seek it, we are wrong, and so it eludes our grasp. In this case, for instance, if Mary wilfully ignored another's claims, selfishly trampling under foot every demand upon her which was opposed to her inclination, and weakly indulged her own predilections, do you suppose it would enhance her felicity? Far from it! So mistaken an action would bring in its train the very defeat it was meant to obviate: you see, I have argued in a circle," continued Kate, smiling; "and come back to my former assertion—happiness or peace comes with the fulfilment of our duties, otherwise it comes not at all."

"That is absurd talk," interrupted Julia, brusquely; "supposing she should never marry, what a wretched life is before her! We shall hear next of her vocation to be a Sister of Charity, and be disgraced by her creeping about in loose black habiliments, in the lowest parts of the town."

"You need be under no apprehension that Mary will forsake her home," said Kate, stiffly, "to seek extraneous outlets for her sympathies, so long as she has undoubted claims upon her within it. She has been too well taught, and is too sensible to neglect her present duties for those she might thankfully adopt were she free to do so; her place for the time being she knows full well is with our parents, bending beneath their first great affliction, and wheresoever hereafter her real obedience is due there will it be rendered."

Mrs. Charles expressed herself thoroughly satisfied since Mary was not going to retire from the world. She could not, however, refrain from animadverting very strongly upon the unusual course her sister-in-law was pursuing, reverting

again and again to Sisterhoods and their tendencies, now to decry their influence and use, declaring that all members were miserable sinners, depending upon their good works for salvation; now to abuse their bearing and attire, observing she never met a woman in that peculiar sort of fancy dress without feeling she was a walking evidence of pride and affectation. Kate vehemently protested against the want of charity which could put so unjust a construction upon the unobtrusive garments whose exclusiveness was a necessity for those ministering among the most ignorant and depraved of the populace: it was a protection among the vicious of a crowded disorderly city, as well as among the tramps of the provinces.

"How could you and I, Julia," she continued, "in our *moirés* and *brocades*, pass freely to and fro in places where most are needed the soothing hand and gentle words of those who give up health, time, and sympathies, for the welfare of the out-cast and the wretched? all honour to their devoted singleness of purpose! Unlike you, I never meet a Sister without a strong inclination to exhibit the reverence in which I hold their admirable self-abnegation."

It was seldom Kate spoke out so freely except in the close companionship of those who entertained similar sentiments with herself. That bad habit, now so prevalent, of gossiping concerning religious feelings and affecting religious sensibilities, both Mr. and Mrs. Howard had always strenuously suppressed, both by precept and example; therefore their children were wont to be rather reserved than otherwise upon all their inner perceptions and tendencies, for random talk makes us all too prone to cherish the vanity inherent in every human breast, lurking there, ever ready to show itself upon the slightest opportunity; if

crushed out from dress or ornament, it will peep forth again in acquirements or intellects ; repress that and it may even appear in legitimate avocations, insidiously creeping out at the point least expected, and therefore least regarded, probably ending in the "pride that apes humility."

The Blessed Virgin's whole life of modest, silent retirement is the best homily on the avoidance of talkativeness; notwithstanding all the great things that had befallen her, she is ever placed before us still and quiet, never speaking of them, but pondering over them in her heart.

"You must surely remember," said Kate, "Clara Amesley telling us of the consideration her unpretending black dress always secured for her in the haunts of vice of the east of London, even among the worst characters: men of brutal expression, with oaths on their lips, would draw aside to let her pass; outcast women, accustomed to all wickedness and misery, would shrink silently in dark corners at her approach, self-condemned, poor things."

"I shall lose all patience if you instance Clara," said Julia; "one of the most disreputable things I ever knew was her withdrawal from society; she, whose beauty and talents might have commanded any station, to pass her days in the vicinity of those filthy docks; that she lost her life through such nonsensical obstinacy was a natural consequence of her folly."

"Poor Clara was assuredly one of those who did angels' work on earth," sighed Kate; "all the world was roused into regret and pity, when she died of that malignant fever; there can be no doubt it was brought over in a ship from the West Indies, and she caught it from the sailor's wife whom she tended in her wretchedness. Yet she died in her self-imposed duty passing from a

holy life through a blessed death to her reward, and who would not rather envy than mourn her fate? There can never exist on the earth a lovelier woman, either in person or mind than she was; her very name has become a household word throughout England, for mention it where you will, it ever invokes a tribute of respect and praise. Poor Clare! there were few so devoted or so good! Julia, you must own she was admirable in every phase of life."

Kate's eyes were suffused with tears, for Clare had been her intimate friend who, upon a great family misfortune, the result of a crime—had fled for this shelter in the church, and found peace in suffering for others.

To recover her equanimity Kate walked to the window, lingering a long time over the flowers in the basket, not choosing to return to her seat until she could present a calm face to the cold scrutinizing eye she knew would rest so relentlessly upon her,—but as is often the case where we feel deeply, the tears would well up continuously, in spite of her strong desire to repress them, she was considerably relieved therefore, when Julia spoke from her sofa.

"I was always afraid Clare's defective example would influence Mary's impressible nature, therefore it is comforting to find she will not do the same. As you have been summoned all the way from Marston-le-Grange to impart this affair, I conclude that I am not to enter upon it either with your mother or herself." Strange to say, Julia seemed to construe into a compliment what was obviously caused by her own difficult temper and worldly spirit. "I trust," she continued, "Mary will not cause the world to talk by having all her dress adjusted according to those ugly square straight fashions which I consider rather

more objectionable than a positive Sister's costume. There are some girls who do so, always worrying their minds' life out to indulge their own conceit, apeing a singularity of dress, abjuring ornaments, and driving out in the same toilettes which a few hours previous were darting down dirty little streets and courts. I shall observe Mary narrowly, and at the first symptoms of eccentricity, I shall interfere, and not spare her then upon any part of the subject. Tell her on this condition only she may count on my forbearance."

Kate soon rose to go, relieved that her unpleasant errand was over, and delighted that her only stipulation was one so trivial and absurd, she answered for Mary that she would be as careful and *recherché* in her toilettes as heretofore, knowing well that her dress was remarkable only for its elegant simplicity.

Returning to Harley Street, she had the pleasure of recounting her interview, in the highest spirits at her own success, informing them as the acme of her good generalship, that they were to be exempt from all private worry from their imperious relative.

CHAPTER XXII.

HILVINGTON.

TIME in its progress had wrought no improvement in the internal polity of the circle at Hilvington. In this case the growth of evil had strengthened and increased until it exceeded all

bounds, exerting the most injurious power over the temper and life of both husband and wife.

Continual contradiction and consequent irritation had worked up the poor half-witted young man to a state sometimes bordering on frenzy, so that his love for Euphine had dwindled into a mere recollection of the past, seldom recalled to his memory by any traits of affection on her part. The contempt his mental and bodily feebleness had begun to inspire in her had increased by culpable indulgence, so that habitually both in thought and action, he was associated in her mind with no feeling but that of the most insolent scorn, which reigned supreme in her heart as a wilfully indulged sin, and had wholly usurped the place of the gentle forbearance it became her duty to practise upon linking her destiny with one so weak.

Gradually the evil spirit had crept in as she gave way more and more to the vanities of the world, which at baptism she had vowed to resist, a vow probably unthought of day by day. She had been educated to think only of her position in the world, to prize her good looks and accomplishments as a means of obtaining a suitable establishment; for wealth, as a natural consequence, she had been willing to barter all her better aspirations. During her father's life she revelled in a luxurious home with the means of enjoying all worldly amusements, and these according to her idea ought to weigh first in the scale. He had lived beyond his income, and at his death she, however unwillingly, acknowledged the necessity of entering upon some one of the few ways of a livelihood open to a lady. It was at this juncture, like a ray of sunshine piercing the cloud which overshadowed her future, that Mr. Huntley's proposal of marriage was made to her, and although she sneered at and amused herself

with his mental deficiencies, she had neither the honesty nor the moral courage to withstand the golden bait.

Lacking principle, her ill-regulated mind shrunk from poverty, which uprightly borne, ever exacts self-denial. Her one cry was for riches, until in the fever of her jaundiced mind, she could realize no good in aught else. Having obtained them she had no right to murmur at the attendant inconvenience, knowing from the first the possession of a fortune must be in her case encumbered with such a husband. This was but another instance that the thing inordinately coveted brings not in its train the blessings we had fondly hoped.

It is a failing of our weak nature thus to indulge in the overweening aspirations against which our Blessed Lord entered His protest upon the occasion of His two Apostles asking of Him to sit on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom, for on the occasion (the Festival of S. James the Great) when the whole occurrence is related, we are also told of Herod's persecution, whereby their mother's yearning desire was granted, but in so different a manner to the proud pre-eminence she had fondly imagined for them. Her two sons were singled out: indeed as she had asked they should be, for the one led the van the other brought up the rear of Apostolic martyrdom.

Euphine had really broken the tenth commandment by her covetousness, and now having obtained her wish, she herself turned it into the curse it could not fail to prove, by her wilful obstinacy.

Mrs. Silvertown, in obedience to an imperious invitation, which was in fact a command, had once or twice since we last saw her, visited them, but each time in greater fear and discomfort, owing to her daughter's ill-temper and Mr. Huntley's augmented malady.

gain our story brings us into that handsome living-room apparently less than ever the abode of comfort or happiness. Kisty is lounging among cushions of the softest of sofas, a tiny lap-dog sharing his luxurious repose. Euphine is arranging a beautiful bouquet in a Bohemian vase, as she frequently replenished it from a glass on the table, he uttered a prolonged hissing sound indicative of his dislike of the cold pure air, accompanying it with grimaces at his wife whose back was turned. Unknown to him she was watching his movements in the mirror, and accordingly her temper was rising at his uncomplimentary gestures. He was trying to irritate her by only means of revenging the many annoyances he could not evade. With this view he condescendingly pulled the little spaniel's tail, thereby inducing it to bark with short snappish yelps, such as were peculiarly trying to nerves already jarred by the frequency of his alarming

"Don't, Kisty," she said at length impatiently, "that dog worries me to death; I will turn you out if you are so troublesome."

heedless of her remark, he went on inciting the animal to more uproarious demonstrations, resorting to every teasing expedient he could think of until the reiterated snarls and growls were really unbearable.

"Be quiet, I tell you," exclaimed Euphine, now aroused, "and make that dog so, or it will growl for you and him," and with her hand she hastily scattered some drops of water in the spaniel's face.

The lowering expression so ready to appear at offence, at once clouded Kisty's fair delicate features, giving hideous expression to his face; none but herself, knowing the danger of urg-

ing him beyond certain limits, would have felt the importance of controlling themselves, and have left him quietly undisturbed. But not so with Euphine, her own patience, never very elastic, had latterly quickly evaporated at the slightest provocation, so upon the present occasion she was fast losing temper. And again she sprinkled the water plentifully around; this time it fell on both her tormentors, effecting the outburst she seemed determined to conjure up.

Her husband rose precipitately, evincing every sign of passion, sputtering forth a volley of vehement remarks, uttered too volubly to be understood, for the quick succession of epileptic fits had seriously affected his speech as well as his understanding. Purposely unobservant of his evident displeasure, and designing to vex him to the utmost in retaliation for the annoyance he had originated, she burst forth singing in a loud trilling voice, knowing it was the thing of all others he most disliked; even when quite composed and amiable that irritating mocking note of hers was always more than his nerves could bear, and this day when already unwisely excited, it fretted his susceptible temperament beyond endurance.

"Who is making a noise now? You be quiet," he shouted vociferously, working himself up into an ungovernable rage.

Unmindful of consequences she also lost all command of herself, and yielding to a passionate impulse, darted forward, wrenching round his slender waist to conquer him by force, calling him "a stubborn idiot," who should be reduced to order by a strait waistcoat if he were not amenable to her wishes, laughing an insulting tantalizing laugh at his impotent endeavours to release his arm: when at length she loosed her hold she dashed the remaining contents of the jug in a

copious stream over both himself and the dog. From exhaustion he had sunk on the sofa, but rose indignant at this new insult, only to fall back however more powerless than ever.

"You do that again," he gasped, recovering a little, "and I'll throw the dog at your head."

She took no heed, and only sang the louder, at the same time resuming her occupation, and cutting a long stalk from a spray of fuchsia which, whether by accident or design, glanced from the point of her scissors into his face; in a moment, ere she had time to ward it off, the dog was hurled with all the infuriate violence of insanity against the tall beautiful pink vase, overturning it with a crashing sound. Multitudinous fragments flew about in all directions, and one sharp-cornered piece unfortunately entered Euphine's eye, causing her to cry aloud for aid as she fell on the carpet in agony. Kisty sat for a moment stunned with the combined noises of breaking glass and his wife's shrieks, until he perceived what had happened, and then heedless of her continued screams, he exultingly walked round to the other side of the room, picked up the wretched dog, now saturated with water, and still deaf to her cries, carried it off caressingly, lavishing on it every term of endearment.

Through the open door, the servants attracted by the uproar, ran in to give assistance, her maid dexterously extracting the chip of glass from under her eyelid. The medical man from Compton Ling being summoned arrived with all speed. After a careful examination, attended with intense suffering to Euphine, he gravely shook his head, fearing the ball had sustained some injury, and wishing to be made acquainted with every particular relative to the accident.

Euphine gave her own version, attributing it

solely to Mr. Huntley's impatience of all necessary control. The surgeon observed as he took leave that, "If he gave symptoms of so much violence without provocation, some restraint was advisable for the sake of her own safety."

Miserable, angry, and in pain, she retired to her darkened room, bewailing the manifold misfortunes to which she was doomed, her ill-temper not at all lessened by the conviction that this contre-temps was of her own seeking, and that throughout the whole scene Kisty was far less to blame than herself.

He, poor fellow, having nothing to do, and no one to assume the onerous task of his amusement, denied admittance to his wife's apartments, and quite without resources, wandered about vacantly and listlessly from room to room, unable to hit upon any expedient to kill time: doubtless the accident, so much more injurious than he had any idea of inflicting, had increased his usual infirmity. The dog he had shut up in an empty stable, connecting it in some way with Euphine's discomfort.

The broken vase had been removed from the drawing-room, but the flowers were there still when he again sauntered in; these he flung about in all directions, trampling them ruthlessly under foot, bruising their delicate petals, and crushing out their sweet perfume, with a savage pleasure, in the mere act of destruction, looking about for some further congenial occupation, when suddenly he was attracted by the glitter of steel on the writing-table. His eye glistened, his countenance relaxed into a pleased expression, and with a gratified smile gathering round his mouth, now become painfully silly in expression, he darted forward, securing his wife's keys at once, and exhibiting a spoilt child's glee at their possession. He was

only just in time, for Jackson, entering at the moment, went direct to the table and carried off the key-basket which her mistress had sent her to fetch.

Reclining in her own room, Euphine had suddenly remembered her keys, and, alive to the danger of allowing them to be within her husband's reach, had despatched her maid forthwith to secure the basket which contained them. This she did, locking it up at once in her mistress's escritoire, carelessly ignorant of its contents having been rifled, and omitting to mention Kisty's presence below.

Being satisfied on this point, and the pain of her eye greatly relieved by the application of the prescribed lotions, Euphine lay back comparatively at ease, desiring the house should be kept very quiet and herself left undisturbed.

Once in the course of the evening she rang to know how Mr. Huntley was amusing himself. And being told he was extended full length on the lawn, apparently in a high state of delight, clapping his hands, hooting and shouting at every bird and butterfly that flew past, she imagined he would trouble them no more that day and night. Safely left to his own devices, she determined to punish his offence to herself by ordering him a very plain dinner and no dessert, as gluttony was another of his failings. He was furious upon the discovery, rushing up to her, and nearly beating in the panel of the door until he gained admittance; but there was no redress, she merely reminded him of the discomfort he had caused, and that unless he behaved better on the morrow, the same thing would occur again.

He left her, grumbling to himself that she was a cross old wife; but he would have his fun for all that.

The night closed in, quiet and still as it is in a secluded country house; all were in bed and asleep. Mr. Huntley's attendant had left him as usual, his night-light securely inclosed within its shade so that he could not possibly get at it. Euphine had sunk into a deep sleep, the combined effects of ease after an intense pain and extreme fatigue. Contrary to the doctor's first opinion, the injury to her eye was found far less serious than had been imagined, even the inflammation had subsided to a great degree.

Their rooms were cut off from the corridor by thick baize doors, and this privacy enabled Kisty to enjoy without fear of detection the result of his surreptitious abstraction of the bunch of keys. Mr. Bradley's companionship had long since been dispensed with; the lady had found his presence irksome, and had intimated a desire for his removal upon the pretext of her husband's dislike to another person continually being with them.

When convinced there was no further fear of detection, Mr. Huntley arose cautiously and took a box of wax lights from some concealed nook, childishly delighted to have so forbidden a treasure in his possession undisturbed, and amused himself with them for a long time, turning them out, handling them, caressing them fondly,—a painful sight. He lighted one, watching the flame gradually appear, flash out, and subside; that he threw down, and it smouldered in the carpet. He lit another with eager interest; it flared up at once, and he glanced stealthily round as he ignited his dressing-gown, which, however, was of a thick material and would not light, and his match went out. Stamping angrily, he struck another and another, with each one firing different objects, and finally the corners of the bed-clothes; springing

centre, he sat down, making the most grimaces, and jibbering at the flames. now become so excited that all thought or discovery had vanished. In fact all sensation was obliterated in the terror which on him as the heat and flames increased ngly. He tried in vain to reach the door, z, choking, stamping, and screaming at his al efforts to find a mode of egress. His the next chamber, was roused from her umber by these unusual sounds, and the f atmosphere which impeded her breathing. cond, almost before she was awake, she om whence the danger sprang, living, as in such constant dread of some accident

Seizing her bell, she rang it furiously, n flung open the communicating door, overwhelming herself in a volume of hrough which she dragged the poor fellow, time rendered speechless, and pushed him into her own room, where he fell flat on

Again she pulled the bell violently, unt of all the household, who came pouring one individually talking or screaming adest.

r was procured, blankets were torn from and saturated, cans, and jugs, and baths uptied in every direction, promptly arrested progress of the fire, and once assured on nt she turned her attention to the culprit: lying on the floor, and it was plain that e who had attempted to pass must have d on him. The butler was the first to at- his rescue; frightened at his motionless nce, he openly expressed his disapproba- the manner in which he had been treated mistress, who, however, still irate, hoped ght be a lesson to him, and if he were a

sufferer it was all the better, it might prevent him acting in such a manner a second time.

"I don't think he will remember much again, Mrs. Huntley," remarked Colson, with some asperity; "he is black in the face, and I believe smothered; shame on us all that it should be so;" but his look plainly indicated whose was the real blame.

Euphine started forward with blanched cheek and clasped hands fairly terrified, whatever anger she had cherished, vanishing at so staggering an assertion; the revulsion of feeling was as sudden as complete; at once she was at his side, frantically imploring him to give some sign of life, assisting to place him on her couch, and falling by his side sick and shuddering as her hand came in contact with his cold, clammy face, the next moment exerting herself with renewed vigour to have him covered with every article that had not been seized upon in the universal deluge. She chafed his nerveless hands, made others rub his feet, had mustard-plaisters applied, held her salts to his nostrils, and all the while incoherently issued a multiplicity of orders.

"A hot bath must be prepared, some one must ride as fast as horse could carry him to Compton Ling; her mother must be telegraphed for; they must bring warmer blankets, furs, anything."

Still he remained senseless and stiff. Her anguish was becoming intense. Had the indulgence of her resentment brought her to such a strait? Could he be dead? As such ideas crossed her mind she became almost frantic, lavishing on him every endearing name, multiplying every care and caress. His face was discoloured by the smoke, if not by suffocation; his feet were icy cold, and one hand hung limber and listless unsupported by the couch. As minute after mi-

nute passed the suspense seemed unendurable, she was working herself up to a state of frenzy. All remembrance of her own pain was absorbed in the greater evil of the terribly engrossing present. The scared maids flitted about the chamber, still trembling lest the flames should burst out afresh. Men were passing and repassing with supplies of water, for it was feared some of the woodwork was still smouldering. Within those costly rooms laden with all the luxuries wealth could accumulate, there was now such self-accusing wretchedness as, it is to be hoped, is seldom experienced; terror and compunction reigning by turns over the whole household. The heavy steps of coarse men, the quick rough remarks unheeded now, with ever and anon the dash of water wherever smoke seemed gathering, followed frequently by the crash of some rare delicate old piece of china or glass, made a hideous tumult all round, while an ominous silence reigned where the group watched the apparently lifeless body, and where the wife was now kneeling, now standing in all attitudes, the very impersonation of despair.

Little heeded they within that room, the bright full silvery moon, shining so gloriously on hill and dale without, and looking down in silent splendour upon this scene of misery, her refulgent light pouring in unobstructed through the now curtainless window.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

PAINFULLY slow and heavily passed the next few hours, dragged on the leaden wing of time, as though their length were indefinite; and even when the tardy sound of horses' feet broke on the stillness, the momentary feeling of hope was dashed to the ground almost at its birth, for the servant only returned to say the medical man at Compton Ling was away, engaged some miles off, and likely to be detained all night; consequently an inferior surgeon had to be roused up, a nervous old man who had long given up practice, and who was alarmed at the unusual case he had been called in to prescribe for, and refused to do more than apply general remedies to restore animation.

Physicians were telegraphed for from London. But hours must elapse before help came from that quarter, and what might not ensue from such delay? Perhaps the most trying thing that could have been devised for Euphine's punishment, would have fallen short of the positive torment this suspense inflicted. And when at last the learned men were assembled, the shock had been so great that there was little to be done. By their united efforts circulation was restored. He lived, but that was all that could be said. By degrees nourishment was administered at first in the smallest possible quantity, but day after day, month after month passed, and still he lay in that dreamy, quiescent state, till the fact gradually asserted itself that there was no further hope, and that so he would remain probably for years.

Euphine was appalled at the notion! Had all

her machinations resolved themselves into such a result? Was she to be reduced to the grade of nurse to a man of unsound intellect? Any position in life, however irksome, would have fallen short of the repugnance with which she contemplated such an idea. It was unendurable. Submission, patience, were words without meaning, unsuited to her most miserable calamity; and as she began to realise the extent of the affliction she raged and stormed about her room in senseless rebellion like an enraged tigress, utterly incapable of looking the sad reality in the face, and remembering with bitter disdain her own short-sighted artifices which had secured to her only this despicable burden, from whose weight there was no chance of escape. Reston-Crowe and Suthermann both agreed that his lungs were perfectly sound, and they also said that the mind having succumbed the body would suffer less wear and tear, and consequently there was little cause to fear dissolution. Both were persuaded he would continue perfectly harmless, and could remain under Mrs. Huntley's charge without the slightest fear of inconvenience.

Those two gentlemen thinking probably from her ruffled manner when called in, that she only dreaded losing him, whether by death or by removal, were far from guessing how much she was influenced by compunction just at that moment. But hers was not a mind constituted to retain impressions, however strong or painfully produced. When the shock was over, and she had allowed herself some months' relaxation, and the undefined dread had resolved itself into the certainty of the entire removal of that constant disquietude which had ever incubus-like fixed itself at her side, existence again resumed its pleasing aspect, and she began to rally wonderfully; true, it was a drawback to have him near her in that hopeless state,

but still enjoyment, to a certain degree, might be obtained, in fact to a very considerable extent, without inconvenience, for now that he had ceased to distinguish her from others, or at least to give any outward sign of recognition, she could follow the bent of her own inclination, and remain with him or not according to her pleasure.

It was soon decided that proper attendants should be placed with him, and under pretext of getting better advice, the establishment was removed to London. A handsomely appointed house in Belgravia was decided upon for a term, its chief advantage being that a whole suite of apartments was divided off from the rest of the rooms, which could be given up entirely to Kisty; and so complete was this privacy, that it amounted really to a total exile. She simply ignored his existence as connected with her own, and hoped that the gay world would do so altogether.

Mrs. Charles Howard was among the first to welcome her back to old familiar scenes; in many ways they had formerly suited each other, and now that Euphine announced her intention of entering into all the amusements of the world, and enjoying whatever wealth could obtain, Mrs. Charles's reception of her was proportionally gracious.

As the autumn and winter passed, and spring came on, Mrs. Huntley prepared to make her house as attractive as might be, plunging into the gaieties and absurd follies of the day with all the greater zest after the recent emancipation from her secluded country life. She had the grace upon her first settling in town to devote certain hours in the middle of each day to the unfortunate Kisty; that pet name was fast becoming obsolete, for his futile attempt at language was but a sort of mumbling quite unintelligible and probably without meaning. She invariably took

tea with him, remaining by his couch until ten o'clock ; but as invitations poured in, her engagements and her toilette usurped the greater portion of day and night ; Kisty's demand upon her time was by degrees diminished, and before the season was nearly over a hasty visit of a few minutes after dinner was all she could spare for him, to whom she was indebted for her position and the means of gratifying the ephemeral delights of her pleasure-loving heart, and whose life she had vowed at God's altar to share, whether for better or for worse.

Mrs. Howard and Mary had of course called upon her, but as might have been foreseen, Mrs. Howard's gently expressed hopes and unobtrusive suggestions concerning Mr. Huntley's treatment and management were allowed to pass by, neither acted upon nor resented, proving her determination to do as she pleased without reference to any one.

Mrs. Howard was deeply pained at the whirl of dissipation in which she lived, and at the request of Mrs. Silvertown, begged Julia as the person who exercised most influence over her, to remonstrate upon her glaring disregard of what was her duty ; but this Mrs. Charles energetically declined to do, observing, Euphine had developed into an extremely determined character, whom it would not at all suit her to offend, and that as she was now emphatically a woman of the world, she had better be left to steer her own course ; she added, that if the two ladies were really uneasy, they had better consult together, and between them they might perhaps hit upon some fortunate expedient which, without curtailing Mrs. Huntley's pleasures, might also secure her husband's comfort and happiness. She reminded Mrs. Howard that Euphine would stand no lecturing from her mother, as she very

well knew, having tried that plan as far as she dared, some time ago.

Mrs. Howard acted on this hint, and found the old lady in a sad state of mind, by turns blaming her daughter's want of common feeling for the poor boy, as she termed him; or bewailing the deplorable state of her child's home, and the false position she was occupying in society: she affirmed that Euphine was driven into every extreme of amusement, only because such a burden at home was unbearable. Mrs. Howard was shocked beyond measure, determining energetically to spare no effort to improve the state of affairs in this most unhappy family; she touched as slightly as possible upon the obvious fact that this misery at least was of their own seeking. The folly so many of us commit in choosing our cross, was indeed brought home to them; the one He gives us is the best to bear.

Mrs. Silvertown having relieved herself by numerous complaints and lamentations gradually became more confidential, appearing desirous to mention to Mrs. Howard a plan she had been considering for weeks, but was too nervous to broach to Euphine until she was sure of some powerful support. Her idea was, that as Kisty was perfectly harmless and childish, and also constantly attended by his own people, he might just as well go back and live at Hilvington. It would be more comfortable and better for him in all ways to breathe the fresh country air, and live surrounded by rural objects to attract his eye; instead of passing day after day in those gloomy forlorn rooms which looked out on a dead blank wall, where sunshine could hardly penetrate. She added, that she herself was very lonely in town, and would much prefer taking up her abode with him there altogether. If Mrs. Howard would help her to

gain Euphine's consent to this plan it would be a real kindness. The proposal would come with greater force from her, as Euphine really was influenced by her opinions, at least, more so than by those of any other persons.

Mrs. Howard thought it on the whole a very sensible scheme, and readily undertook to use her utmost endeavours for its consummation. She agreed to open the project at once to Mrs. Huntley, and thus paved the way for Mrs. Silverton's more definite arrangements. She performed her task with such judicious tact that Mrs. Huntley caught at the notion as an inspiration, and liberally entered into all the necessary expenses, so that it might be put into execution without delay.

Very soon the long closed-up house was re-opened and re-peopled, and Mr. Huntley permanently established there with his mother-in-law, who, after a time, found herself more cheerful than she had been for many years past. She was ultimately well rewarded for her kindly care of the poor invalid, as after a time he began to evince unmistakeable pleasure in her company, and invariably brightened up at her daily visits.

They were located thus for years under the same roof; Kisty never rallying from his deplorable helplessness; and Mrs. Silverton reaping peace and comfort from her penitent resolution thoroughly carried out, to devote herself unconditionally to her son-in-law and so compensate, as far as was in her power, for the evil she had helped to bring about.

CHAPTER XXIV.

COUNTRY VISITS.

ARTHUR and Kate had duly paid their visit to Paris; the business was satisfactorily effected, and the broad acres of Marston-le-Grange were extended by the needful piece of adjoining land. They remained in London only one day, merely to join their fellow travellers; and Kate's heart was gladdened by escorting northward to her beloved home, her father, mother, and sister.

Mary's mind was quickly recovering its usual tone after its severe tension; she was not one to let her inward struggle display itself flauntingly before the world. Except from an unusual serenity, a certain quietness of speech and manner betokening a passionless rest, unruffled by expectation or suspense, there was no change from her former manner, at least no stranger would have remarked it in any way; perhaps the most notable change was, that each individual of her family treated her now with a consideration and thoughtfulness not often vouchsafed to a younger sister; in fact, with Mrs. Howard and Walter Wiltonthorpe it amounted almost to the respect which springs from a feeling of reverence. Many mere acquaintances who pronounced Mary unimpressible, uncongenial, an automaton, demonstrating neither character nor life, but these were the superficial observers. Few really commanded so much admiration and love as Mary Howard from her true friends; her sincere conscientiousness attracted with magnetic power their esteem, no less than their affection.

Now that they were again re-united, Mrs. Howard was glad to resume her old habits of

pleasant companionship with her elder daughter, being able to discuss the late peculiar events with her as she could with none other, and both by examining separately their individual knowledge and impressions gained a clearer insight into the truth of the whole affair. She showed her daughter Hilary's parting gift to herself: a bracelet which excited Kate's wonder, on account of its design causing her to examine it minutely. "Black enamel," she said, "covered with an arabesque, in gold and diamonds; it is perfect, mother, dear, so exactly what his good taste would suggest. I imagine he intended it as a mourning bracelet in honour of dear Ernest."

"Look more closely, Kate," said her mother, "and you will see that the delicate tracery resolves itself into letters, the centre of each of which is a diamond; it requires a little close inspection at first, but once catch the design, and my boy's name is always present; the date of his death is on the inside, along that groove, containing a lock of his dear brown hair."

Kate pondered over it more attentively, "Ah! I see," she exclaimed, repeating the capitals, "ERNEST HOWARD. What a very nice conception; so like Hilary, almost as handsome a souvenir as mine." She drew it from her finger and compared the two. "His presents are of the very best. And if ours are so magnificent, what must Mary's be, reserved little puss, keeping all things to herself, she has never admitted having accepted one."

"You are quite wrong in your assumption, my love," said Mrs. Howard; "Mary carries her remembrances in her heart, and there only I think."

"But do you mean, mother," exclaimed Kate, "that whilst he gave you and me these valuable jewels he offered none to Mary?"

"Even so," answered Mrs. Howard.

"Well! none can speculate upon the acts of those exalted ones, for this is really inconceivable," and Kate expressed her astonishment by every variety of interjection, much to her mother's amusement; she determined to solve the problem at some future opportunity, convinced that Hilary would gladly have invested her sister with his entire worldly means if, by so doing, he could have signified his appreciation of her worth, and for this reason she was the more perplexed at the singular omission.

After a few days' residence the whole party seemed greatly improved by the change. Mrs. Howard was relieved of much care and anxiety, for fresh associations and habits with pleasant family intercourse were the very best ingredients for restoring Mary's happiness, and highly productive of good results. Her husband too was fast gaining health, occupying himself daily out of doors, thereby strengthening both body and mind, and distracting his attention from the one thought which had usurped the place of all others, and, as is ever the case in our delicate organization, disturbing the whole system. He had been accustomed to country life in earlier years, and now reverted to out-door occupations with extra zest and enjoyment. She could not be sufficiently thankful for this perfect rest from solicitude, which she derived from her reliance on Kate's judicious and affectionate influence with her sister; she was always sensible and sympathetic, and yet by well-timed joyousness contrived to win her from the somewhat sombre despondency to which they feared she would give way.

One day at breakfast Arthur begged they would make their plans for the afternoon irrespective of him, as he had business which would detain him

the whole day, and perhaps until a rather late dinner hour. Kate was on the alert, at once suspending her tea-making, to tax him with a design of running off again to the horrid coal pits, which she knew to be so dangerous; to this accusation Arthur laughingly assented; and his wife declared that the very fact of his mooted his plan in public was a proof of his guilty conscience, or he would have confided it to her previously.

They were all much amused at her eager determined manner; her father taking Arthur's part, insisting, that if he had business in a coal district, it was only sensible to go and look after it; Kate must not suppose life had no duties beyond the shadow of her shoe-string.

"My dear father," expostulated Kate, "you are little aware of my just cause of complaint: Arthur has behaved shamefully in this matter, and knows himself to be a most cowardly culprit, therefore I have no hesitation in exposing his delinquencies. The fact is, he has a pet colliery about ten or fifteen miles off, and before the new meadows took up all his time and attention, both were lavished unceasingly upon the hobby. You may now see for yourselves that there is quite sufficient to destroy any vanity in my composition, as I only come second to coals and grass. I assure you it is a fact, he used to ride off by cock-crow, leaving me to pine in my bower alone, like the heroine of an old romance all day long; sometimes I was literally starving before he found his way home to dinner, and then in such a plight, no one but myself would have owned him, smelling of earth, gas, coal tar, and all sorts of abominations. I have even known him to be obliged to wash his hands half a dozen times over before he could make them at all like those of a white Christian.

"Do you know, my dear father, he used actually

to go down into the pits, notwithstanding all my objections, yes, actually! and put on for the occasion a sort of canvas all-over dress. I dare say he descended with a lighted candle on his head, stuck in a lump of mud; but I am not sure about this last embellishment; all the rest is strictly true, I vouch for it, and you can yourself see it is by his guilty expression."

They quizzed Kate unmercifully for her jealousy of the colliery's superior attractions.

Arthur then informed Mrs. Howard he had only latterly discovered this mine on his estate; he was having a shaft sunk, and naturally felt responsible for the poor fellows who would pass so much of their lives under ground; surely it was no very great effort to descend occasionally for an hour or so, if only to make them contented with their calling. As a general rule he thought people in the higher classes did not sufficiently consider the feelings of those in a lower station; for instance, if a working man contrasted his path in life with theirs it almost seemed impossible that he should not look upon them with some degree of envy, and who could be astonished that they occasionally gave expression to their feelings? he himself, however, had always found the working classes on the whole amenable to common sense, and ready at the first appearance of good will on the other side to banish all acrimony and ill feeling.

"That sentiment would tell on the hustings," exclaimed Kate, "whenever you determine upon entering Parliament; but I am not to be diverted from my just complaint by a clap-trap parade of philanthropy. You evidently feel yours is a weak cause, and you are trying to strengthen it by a commonplace affectation of extra goodness entirely out of character; you have cruelly neglected me for this colliery, and I shall now expose your

shortcomings. To begin with,—you left me to receive strange visitors alone upon my first arrival, a most unjustifiable proceeding, and one I shall not forgive until duly acknowledged and repented of.”

“I own that just at that time I certainly behaved ill,” said Arthur; “but that was a most critical moment for my pit; if I had left it to its fate then no after care could have made up the omission. Come, Mary, I appeal to you to take my part; I assure you that Kate’s disquietude always magnified the flight of time, and notwithstanding my repeated return safe and sound, she would persist in living the day through in fear of my being buried alive.”

Kate laughingly persevered, “It is all very well now to treat the subject thus lightly, but I am not the only one who judged in the same way, for Oliver Bayley, only a week or two back, said there was great danger in descending the pit, and he perfectly understood all about it; he said other pits had been perforated all around this estate, and your colliers might at any time break in upon some old workings, in which case every creature down there would be drowned. He told me himself,” added she, “that he never descended with you without a prayer and a sigh.”

“‘The prayer was to his patron-saint,
The sigh was to his lady fair,’”

quoted her husband, lightly; “and we all know Oliver Bayley’s weak points are neither superstition nor sentimentality;” and, lover like, he came behind her chair to make his peace before starting.

“Have you real cause for uneasiness?” said Mary, resuming the subject more seriously.

“I will try to explain,” answered her sister,

"as you know nothing of underground dangers. The old pits, when exhausted, are left untouched, and in time become full of water, the constant flow from the springs being no longer pumped out. Now if in detaching the coal they should go too far in that direction, a complete inundation would ensue, destroying all before it, and there would be an end of his beloved colliery, himself, men, horses, shaft, and everything else; just imagine then if I have not cause for anxiety."

Arthur begged they would observe how Kate's education was progressing since she was now quite conversant with the details of the coal-district; at the same time he lightly evaded her objections, and discovering how late it really was, he hurried away, promising faithfully to be back to an early dinner. Kate then proposed they should all start together to inspect her school, which she was anxious her mother should see.

They had founded it for the labourers' younger children; all were under eight years old, and some barely two. She explained that it would not do to interfere with the regular schools in the village, but the Rector had allowed her to commence this one which had proved eminently successful, as they might judge by the numbers collected.

The working-people were glad to send their children, as it took them out of their way, and without this establishment they must be neglected for years, as the nearest school was two or three miles off, a distance such little feet were quite unable to accomplish.

Mrs. Howard questioned, examined, and approved, highly gratified to find her child thus beginning her married life in useful care for her fellow-creatures.

The party then separated; Mary and her father to have a good long ride through the bracing

northern air; and Mrs. Howard and Kate to spend a quiet morning together.


During Oliver Bayley's visit to them, Kate had been made his confidante, and much that he disclosed weighed on her mind, and she was anxious to disburden herself. Upon his hearing from her of Hilary's probable departure and destination, he had expressed the most unbounded delight, telling her of all his hopes and disappointments with regard to her sister; he declared himself convinced that if the other were removed there would be no drawback to his success, and that Mr. S. Magna's absence alone would ensure his resumption of what he chose to call his "old position in Harley Street."

It was vain to ask on what he built his sanguine hopes, or to suggest he had better trust his chance to time and also to personal improvement. He would listen to nothing; besides, he thought it was by that last consideration he could best influence Mary in his favour; with her to guide and lead him on to better things, and with the hourly contact of her superior mind he should become anything she chose, she should mould him to her will, he would give himself up without reservation to her gentle direction, and become whatsoever she desired. Kate had not spared him, plainly giving her opinion upon those points, and had told him that until he became more settled in his principles it would be ridiculous to ask any girl to share his reckless unsettled life. But he would listen to nothing, only reiterating his unbounded delight at Hilary's departure, whom he spoke of with jealous bitterness; now that he was removed from his path Oliver declared he should not entertain a fear of failure, as Mary, under his direction, was as one under a spell, and it was only now that he should again have fair play. It must be

added, however, that immediately after, moved by some sting of conscience, he had in part related to his cousin his last interview with Hilary, and how he had been almost moved to better things, until Gostenhoffer's unexpected arrival, which he considered a proof of his inability to fight against his destiny. Kate at this juncture had indignantly closed the conversation, after having upbraided him for his total want of gratitude or even common courtesy in presuming to speak, as he had just done, of one who had striven so hard for his spiritual benefit.

Mrs. Howard was much perplexed: she had long feared some such declaration, and now that it had come it was more vexing than she had anticipated, from every point of view, for Oliver would not be ruled by common sense. On the one side the affair was easily disposed of; they both agreed Mary would very soon settle it decisively, if it were brought to her knowledge; but this was just what they had no intention of allowing.

After mature deliberation, Mrs. Howard wrote to her nephew on the subject, which was at once so delicate and painful. She admitted that it was with the desire of sparing her daughter that she had ventured to do so, and appealed to all his best feelings, imploring him by the memory of Ernest, so dear to them both, to abandon his plans for the sake of all parties. She reminded him that Mary was just then suffering under a painful duty in having relinquished her claim upon the *only* one for whom she was likely to feel a preference, and that if he had any real affection for her he would withhold the expression of his sentiments, which he must very well know it would grieve her now to receive. Mrs. Howard wound up by the assurance of her own and his uncle's unchanging regard and hearty desire for his welfare.



She awaited with anxiety the result, and soon heard that immediately upon the receipt of her letter, Oliver, in his usual impetuous manner, had started off to the Continent, only bidding his mother farewell on his way to the train, and refusing to hold correspondence with any of his other relations. Some months afterwards, it was necessary for Mr. Howard to communicate with him, as Mrs. Bayley was seized with the most alarming symptoms of diphtheria, the news of which it was important he should receive at once; but owing to his wandering habits the letter followed him about from place to place, backwards and forwards, until there was no corner for fresh superscriptions on the envelope, which was covered with a marvellous set of hieroglyphics. Indeed it reached him at last, along with the news of her death. This was a great blow to him, for with all his faults he really had an affectionate disposition. Highly indignant that he should not have been able to arrive in time, he wrote resentfully to his uncle, giving him to understand that as England had become so painfully distasteful to him, he should not return thither, but continue and reside abroad for an indefinite period. He stated that he had engagements which would fill up the next six months, and he intended afterwards making his home with a certain Count Plazcs, a Polish nobleman, who was a great musical amateur, and with whose tastes and opinions his own entirely corresponded.

The whole tone of his letter evinced a deep sense of injury, a wounded self-love which was really pitiable, and it ended with a rather grandiloquent boast that his family might perhaps one day hear his name heralded by the trumpet of fame, notwithstanding their evident contempt of his ability to carry out whatever he might choose to

undertake. Enclosed were certain instructions relative to his property, with directions as to the arrangement of his private affairs, which he begged might be managed so as not to require his presence in London, and for which purpose he gave his uncle ample authority to act for him in every way. In short, it was a final adieu, coldly and proudly expressed, so that he clearly intended their intercourse might cease.

Although many inquiries were set on foot, and all members of the family wrote offering every concession, but the one which served as a pretext for self-banishment, it was long, very long, ere any tidings of him reached them again. Little did they deem under what circumstances they would again hear of Oliver Bayley.

* * * * *

The happy visit at Marston-le-Grange being concluded, the Howards took Fontenelle Abbey in their homeward route, having received an invitation which they could hardly have refused, even if they had been less desirous of joining the party there.

Walter, by Mrs. Howard's permission, conveyed to Mary the facts of Hilary's departure; he would have added a few words upon his looks and demeanour at the last, but her quivering lip and silent clasp of the hand showed him how little she could bear on the subject. Upon the receipt of a few hasty lines, Walter had left home suddenly, and remained with his friend up to the moment of starting, and had even gone as far as he could down the channel with him. His presence proved invaluable in those last days, his practical methodical manner of assisting in Hilary's preparations leaving no time for regrets or grief.

From that time forward Walter Wiltonthorpe

took Mary Howard under his especial protection, treating her always with that calm earnestness of manner which silences all remark, and is a respectful tribute to those who interest us, and being able often to spare her by warding off some coldly curious attack.

To her it was a source of thankfulness to possess such a friend, her "Father Confessor," as Mrs. Charles used to call him ; but Mary could smilingly endure such silly remarks when the gain was all on her own side.

One morning she went to his study for a work he wished her to read, as it bore upon a line of conduct he thought she might adopt ; that it was his wish would have been quite sufficient for Mary, but he chose rather to convince her understanding than to accept a blind obedience. In selecting from the well-filled shelves he displaced, perhaps purposely, a very worn copy of the *Christian Year* ; as she picked it up from the carpet to restore to him, he incidentally observed that it had once been Hilary's constant pocket companion, he had discovered it among a heap of MS. pamphlets and papers during the process of packing. Having pointed out the chapters for study in the work he sought, and lined the portions for deeper thought, he placed the two volumes together in her hand, observing with an indulgent smile how tightly her taper fingers closed upon the little worn black cover of the *Christian Year*, bearing as it did evident marks of frequent use. Kind-hearted Walter had noticed how her soft brown eye would brighten as it caught the flash of Hilary's diamond ring on her sister's hand, and how her touch would linger fondly on the smooth enamel bracelet when she passed her arm within her mother's, and he had determined that some day this little souvenir should be hers. As she left him with a quickened

step he turned to resume his pen, murmuring a soliloquy upon the weakness of our frail nature, which required so many helps to sustain it in the great battle of life, even among those capable of practising the greatest acts of self-denial.

The Howard family frequently repeated this their first visit to Fontenelle, and always with increased pleasure. Lord Wiltonthorpe and Mr. Howard suited each other uncommonly well ; Lady Wiltonthorpe had her own reasons for encouraging the intimacy, but she kept them secret until she thought all parties ripe for her scheme.

Knowing how much her husband deplored Walter's determination to lead a single life, she had conceived the idea of arranging a marriage for him, and one day informed Lord Wiltonthorpe, with many diplomatic cautions, that if he acted guardedly as she should dictate, they might, she had not the slightest doubt, bring about a desirable union for him. Mary Howard, she said, was precisely the refined enthusiast to captivate a sound, hard, practical mind like Walter's before he was aware of it, if only they were sufficiently thrown together. Lord Wiltonthorpe therefore must watch for opportunities, and seize upon every pretext for encouraging the intimacy.

He trusted implicitly to his wife's cleverness and foresight, but with the best intentions he bungled sadly in carrying out her instructions, invariably fidgeting out of the way when Walter appeared in the drawing-room, or retreating in the most marked manner whenever they were near each other. On one occasion in particular, he rushed out from the conservatory as they entered by another door, and in his haste upset a rare plant and broke its china pedestal.

Walter, astonished at his brother's strange manner, which had struck him several times before,

pondered over its cause till the whole truth flashed upon him, and by this new light he was able at once to solve the mystery of various events which had caused him much annoyance. He feared this last proceeding must have pained Miss Howard also, and he glanced anxiously towards her; her face was buried in a fragrant flowering shrub. He followed his brother instantly, and forced him to confess the whole plot; catching at the same time a glimpse of Lady Wiltonthorpe in another walk, he faced round, determined to have it out at once, and put an effectual stop to all manœuvring of this description. He again explained fully his own personal convictions upon the matter, making them clearly understand that his remaining at the Abbey until his parsonage was erected would only be conditional upon non-interference in this matter: he appealed finally to Adela's womanly sympathy to erase any unpleasant suspicion their absurd tactics might have engendered in Miss Howard's mind, if only in consideration of the great sacrifice so bravely borne. Her's had been indeed a pure offering to her God, and not a compromise with worldly expedience, and she had a right to the respect and reverence of all who knew of the merits of the case.

CHAPTER XXV.

IMPROVEMENT AND BACKSLIDING.

SURPRISE and pleasure awaited the Howards upon their return to town in finding the Hospital so greatly advanced, that some of the rooms were

quite ready for habitation. Now they might set to work in good earnest, draw up rules, and make final arrangements, for in a few short weeks they hoped that at least the first inmate might be installed.

They had long since singled out the poor young man whom Ernest had so often watched from the back of their house, as their first patient, and he had gratefully accepted the offer. His was a case of atrophy, a slow wasting away of the system in a most lingering decline; it had appeared impossible he should last even until the house was ready for him, so attenuated had he become, and so reduced, that he could take nothing but a little cold water; and yet with the fitful feelings of a confirmed invalid he made up his mind that he should get quite well if only he could remain in the Home. The delight of the family upon his arrival was scarcely less than his own.

The accommodation was for six of each sex, and the most deserving cases were diligently sought out. Mr. Fordholme rendered great assistance, and the religious government of the house was strictly in accordance with Ernest's wishes.

Our old acquaintance Betsy had been rendered supremely happy by an order from Mrs. Howard to her husband for sundry scrolls, groups of Angels, and other decorations connected with his art, the most elaborate being a representation of the miracle which had suggested the idea of the charity to Ernest. This was the scheme Mary had conceived upon the newly married pair's first visit to her, and it had given Carlo ample employment, the profits which arose from it he had placed in Mr. Howard's hands to accumulate, until there should be sufficient to realise the wish of his heart, namely, the obtaining a perfect set of models. Good, amiable Mrs. Merton having heard of his plans, entered into the young couple's interests with her accustomed

energetic warmth of heart, and obtained for Carlo so many orders, with so large a number on her own account, that he was glad to employ others in the trade to do the rough parts, although the finishing touches were all his own, no one else being capable of that branch, as Betsy was very proud to let her friends know.

We may add that his industry and careful habits were crowned with success beyond his most sanguine expectations; the journey to Rome, Florence, and Carrara, whither his good-tempered English wife accompanied him, was satisfactorily achieved; in course of time larger premises became requisite for his increasing trade, and now he is established in the vicinity of Whitechapel, where he employs many workmen; his atelier is a curious mixture of Italians and English, the latter being the majority, for Betsy is too patriotic not to give the preference to her own countrymen. She is become quite matronly, several little ones already clinging around her.

Betsy's early teaching, which for a time seemed to lie fallow and produce no effect, is now bringing forth good fruit, adding another to the many lessons around us, if only we would learn them, which teach us to put all our trust and confidence in Him, Who will accept the most trifling as the greatest work, provided it be done in a single-hearted spirit of devotion to His honour and glory.

It is a painful contrast to turn from the one who, in her humble endeavour to atone for past sins, has altogether forsaken the follies of her youth, and rising superior over her faults, to Louisette, dragging herself down from one unrepented offence to another, sinking from bad to worse, concealing her shortcomings, and flourishing for a season in deception and falsehood.

more than to make darkness visible. In a woman of her impetuous temperament, action almost preceded thought, heedless how fatal the consequences to herself might have been, she dashed out of bed on the opposite side, and rushed towards the maid's room, in her fright shrieking murder, and springing a patent steel rattle which she invariably placed beneath her pillow when her husband slept away from home.

The servants screamed, doors and windows flew open, the men were roused from their beds, the butler from his pantry below, the police admitted, the house searched, but no intruder was found. They however kept watch in the hall until the morning, when the household was interrogated, a needless ceremony, for it was soon discovered that Louissette could no where be found; she had decamped cleverly enough, carrying off some of her mistress's ornaments. It happened fortunately that they were the least valuable of her jewels, only those she wore at ordinary times, the rest being kept in an iron safe let into the wall. Julia's desk was also gone, in which the evening before, she had placed gold and notes to the value of one hundred pounds, the cash for a cheque Charles had left her on his departure; the notes might be traced, but there were only one or two, and the money was almost all in gold.

Nothing was ever more heard of the culprit, probably she started off abroad forthwith. The man was of course an accomplice, it was supposed a relative; he had doubtless undertaken to plunder the safe, and had been secreted in the wardrobe the night before. This might easily have been managed, as Mrs. Charles had made little change in her dress that evening, and Louissette herself had assisted in her toilette both then and later, Julia's own maid having been given a holiday,

with permission to remain at home until the following day.

The excitement and confusion caused by this adventure was not easily forgotten; Mrs. Charles now took as decided a dislike to foreigners as she had been inclined before to believe them all perfection. Not one should ever enter her house again as an inmate. Fanny must acquire languages from natives it was true, but she should do so by journeys to different parts of the continent, and by the regular weekly attendance of masters.

Great was her indignation at the French girl's base ingratitude, and fierce her invectives against Lady Dalton for having suffered her to place so bad a person in close contact with her little girl, that Lady's refusal to speak from her own observation, and her accompanying caution being entirely overlooked. Charles too came in for a full share of reproach that he did not insist upon her removal, if he really had had cause to think her guilty of misconduct before the robbery took place. Every one was included in a sweeping censure. It was so easy to wreak her annoyance upon others, she herself was exempt of course from all shadow of blame.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY ANGELS.

"OH, mother dear! It is too disappointing that you should have been absent from church on this particular day," was Mary's excited remark upon

her return from the usual service, laying down her books as she spoke.

"You look extraordinarily animated, my love," was the answer, "tell me in what way I am so much to be pitied?"

"Dear mother," she continued, "if you had only gone with me I should have been so glad. I cannot tell whether we have a new organist, or whether, as I greatly fear, this is a stranger, but the music was exquisite to-day, something quite remarkable, one could scarcely believe such strains were produced by mortal fingers."

"My dear child," said her mother amused at her enthusiasm, "I have heard nothing of any change, it may be Mr. Temple played better than usual, there is room for improvement."

"Better than usual!" repeated Mary, "I should think he did. Little do you understand the treat my ears have experienced this day. And not myself alone, for every one is talking about it; there is almost as much excitement as if some miracle had been wrought. But I will tell you how it first impressed me. Just as the hour struck, when you know the clergy and choristers come up the nave in procession, instead of the few unmeaning chords and the little piece of soft music we have hitherto been obliged to be content with, the organ pealed forth gloriously until all were in the choir, and then subsided into the sweetest, softest strain, such as we may fancy would waft upward the incense of prayer. Every one looked up in surprise and wonderment, for it was so superior to ordinary music as to strike even the most heedless. In the Psalms too, the fine old Gregorian tones swelled and diminished, and rose again in a manner exceeding all description. I am sure most of the choir forgot their chants to feast their ears; it was the *Attendite popule*, and at the story of

GOD's wrath against the incredulous and disobedient, the organ seemed to pronounce each plague with a living voice, each verse differing in sound, and at the words, 'Then the LORD awakened as a giant,' you can hardly imagine the burst of enthusiastic gladness, which succeeded the low faint lament with which the rejection of the Israelites had been expressed. It was a magnificent offering of worship, such as must elevate and do good to all who assisted in it. I noticed when the clergy began each chant, the instrument upheld the voice, and bore it along; it must have been more easy and far less trying than when they have to lead the organ as is generally the case."

"I am glad, my love, you were so pleased," answered Mrs. Howard, "we must inquire into the particulars of this very wonderful musician."

"Whoever he may be, mother, I owe him many thanks for the great pleasure he has afforded me. I wonder if he will be there again to-morrow? I fear there can be little chance of it."

But Mary was not doomed to disappointment in this case; at the sound of the first few notes on the following day she looked at Mrs. Howard in delight, there could be no doubt that he was a musician of the very first order, and also possessed of deep religious feeling, without which sacred music fails in the very essence of its beauty. The pure taste of the voluntary preceding the litany in a minor key, the perfection of the introit, the musical Amen at the end of each prayer, all bespoke genius of the highest stamp; perhaps the gem of the whole was the Gloria immediately preceding the reading of the Gospel, which burst forth in a shout of triumph, organ, voices, and echo ceasing in the same beautiful alto, as though the strain begun on earth was caught up and continued by the saints above, the sounds of whose

song we may not catch here, but shall do hereafter.

Mary was more than ever impressed, nor she only, for on emerging from the church they found the poor sacristan besieged for information by the congregation. But he could impart little enough to satisfy curiosity. Mr. Temple, the late organist, had resigned, he believed rather unexpectedly; he was ignorant of the reason; his successor he did not know, he had not heard his name. Finally, some of the more pertinacious succeeded in eliciting a few more particulars, which but increased the general astonishment. It seemed that late one night, after the college was closed, the porter had been roused by a loud knocking at the gate; a man bent by age or sorrow impatiently asked an interview with Mr. Fordholme; the porter demurred about giving the message, thinking the stranger might have chosen a more convenient time, as it was a rule not to admit persons after a certain hour, he however produced a note, which he seemed to think would procure his admittance, and in this he was not deceived. What passed between the priest and the pilgrim none could tell; the latter remained at the college in close retirement, so close that the sacristan supposed he had gone away, until he had observed him after a time assisting at all the services in the side chapel.

One day Mr. Temple had been requested to go into the parsonage, and after a time he came out beaming with satisfaction; the sacristan observed this the more, from the fact that he presented him with a handsome gratuity, and gave him to understand that his connection with the church of the Holy Angels had ceased, but that he rejoiced in vacating in favour of so efficient a substitute. He and the new comer had remained a long time

looking over music, and at various intervals playing on the organ, sometimes a piece, sometimes only a few notes, Mr. Temple evidently persuading the other to illustrate all the changes he advocated. The stranger had taken up his abode in the college, but the porter had also been baffled in his inquisitiveness, for when he inquired his name on the plea that letters might arrive for the unknown, he had replied shortly that he never received any, and that he was simply the organist, and wished to be distinguished by no other cognomen.

These few details were all that could be discovered respecting him. Of course many questions were put to Mr. Fordholme, but he was impenetrable, and so gradually curiosity died out as far as the regular congregation were concerned; but every Sunday many were attracted by rumours of the great musician, who so excelled in his art; he himself, the object of so much admiration, cared nothing for his triumphs, withdrawing himself as much as possible from observation, never speaking to any one or leaving the precincts of the building. Almost his whole time was spent at the instrument, not, as might have been expected, in order to practise, for the sounds he drew forth were evidently produced by a master hand, often the outpouring of his wondrous talent in the inspirations of the moment. In the intervals of the services, and sometimes late at night, the swell of the organ might still be heard, but then it spoke the penitent's prayer, the *De profundis*, or the Seven Penitential Psalms, repeated again and again in tones of intense sadness.

Some time had passed, but Mary's enthusiasm and admiration had not ceased, each day and holy season as it returned but increased her appreciation of the thrilling music. It had been a source of

regret to others as well as herself when the church was closed for some necessary repairs; she was expressing to Mr. Fordholme her hope of its being speedily ready for service one day, when he was dining in Harley Street, his face for a moment expressed indecision, and then turning to Mrs. Howard, he asked if she had ever before heard so good a musician?

"Yes," she said; "years ago there was one, who was a brother to my dear Ernest, he would I think have surpassed this performer, for his was the greatest genius I have ever known; I am speaking of my nephew, Oliver Bayley."

"You have not mentioned him lately," said the curate: "is it long since you have heard of him?"

She sighed, and with a look of sorrow begged he would not pursue the conversation, as the subject was most painful to herself. Oliver had been a favourite with them all, linked as his name would ever be with that of her darling son, and another almost as dear had cared especially for him, "I mean Hilary S. Magna," she continued, "who at one time entertained high hopes of his conversion, but evil companions, the pleasures of life, and dissipations of the worst sort unhappily destroyed all his better aspirations. What she had heard of him of late years had been so desperately bad, that total silence was a positive relief.

"And yet," said Mr. Fordholme, "the prodigal at last returned; for the very worst there is hope; do you entertain none for him?"

"For the present none," she said; "perhaps in his old age, or on his death-bed, his eyes may be opened to the truth, I pray that it may be so, and our God is merciful."

"As you say, GOD is ever merciful, even to those who have transgressed seventy times; for in all Christendom there is no greater penitent than

your once depraved nephew. He it is whose gift of harmony is so valuable in our daily worship. He first wrote, and then came a humble penitent and confessed to me the sins of his youth and manhood, fully admitting the evil of his ways, and praying that whenever I thought fit he might be permitted to use his talent in the service of that God from whom he had so widely strayed. I put him to the test of a long and sore probation, through the several gradations of contrition, confession, amendment, and am thoroughly convinced of his sincerity. On Easter Day, for the first time, he was admitted to Holy Communion. His sole wish now is to live unheeded and unsought, spending his remaining days in prayer and solitude,—he who once craved notoriety and applause for every action! It is by his own request I tell you this; he begs you will let his memory die away in obscurity, and only asks your forgiveness and your prayers."

"It is impossible for me to acquiesce in such a desire," said Mrs. Howard. "Oliver unhappy, repentant, alone, and shall I make no effort to comfort him in his misery? It cannot be, I must see him, I must go to him," and she half rose from her chair as if to obey the impulse which would have taken her at once to his side.

Mr. Fordholme went on; "I have had many conversations with him on this subject, but I cannot persuade him to see you; however, when he hears how closely his memory is entwined in your affections, it may alter his determination. By the way, our church is now ready, and will be re-opened for Evensong on Saturday, I hope therefore to-morrow you will come with me alone and see what has been done; when there, perhaps you may find some opportunity of speaking to Oliver."

Mary expressed her gratification at this ar-

rangement, manifesting some curiosity as to what had occupied the workpeople for so many weeks.

Mr. Fordholme regarded her keenly for a moment, wondering if she were in very truth as ignorant as she appeared. She had heard of large blocks of marble having been taken in with much labour early one morning, and from the number of masons employed supposed that some of the stonework must have proved defective, but this was mere speculation; she declared it was really trying that she could obtain so little information on so absorbing a subject.

The ladies gladly kept their appointment, and were delighted with the appearance of the sacred building. They admired repeatedly the delicate fretwork of carving, which now cleansed from dust and dirt, stood out in rich relief; and the gorgeous stained glass, freed from its dingy coating; the benches too had been repolished, and the tiles in the nave replaced where they had been cracked from habitual wear. Their inspection had brought them close to the chancel, where Mr. Fordholme called their attention to the various purifications that had taken place, and bade them note the glossy surface of the pillars at the entrance as an instance.

"Surely this is marble," said Mrs. Howard, "it can be no imitation," and she passed her hand over the smooth exterior as she spoke.

"Even so," said the clergyman; "I wished you particularly to see and admire them before any one else was admitted. It seems to me almost impossible that you, of all people, should have been ignorant of the alteration we have been making. Previous to his departure, your friend, Mr. S. Magna, expressed a desire to replace our imitation pillars by columns of real porphyry; I hesitated on account of the great expense, but this he quickly

overruled by naming a sum, which I knew would even exceed the cost, large as it was ; still I demurred, not being quite sure whether it would be safe to remove them from their position : he offered at once to have the opinion of as many architects and surveyors as I thought fit, and finally said that he had set his heart upon amending this one defect in our beautiful church. He then told me of his destination and of his approaching departure, and pleaded so hard for my concurrence, that all difficulties were soon removed, and the necessary consent of the higher powers obtained, and you see the result.

- I am, of course, very proud of any improvement here, but I really think it was rather overstrained on his part, to insist so strenuously upon this point, as it has cost an immense sum which he could have still bestowed upon us for other purposes, and few would have known our old pillars were imitations."

Mother and daughter were standing close together ; a meaning look and a silent pressure of the hand conveyed to Mary Mrs. Howard's sympathy, each understood that this was Hilary's last souvenir to her he had loved so well. How closely he had studied the peculiar bent of her disposition this act alone would testify.

How complete was their fellow feeling. Far more valuable in her eyes was this offering in the church where she would worship morning and evening than a jewel of great price for her own personal adornment.

Now the mystery was cleared up, now Kate would learn how costly was his parting token to her sister. They had stood still and looked at the beautiful pillars wonderingly, had walked backwards to gaze at them from every point of view, had approached again, touched and re-touched the

brilliant porphyry, hardly knowing how to express their admiration when Mrs. Howard was startled by a tremulous voice at her elbow, accosting her as "dear Aunt;" she turned and caught in both hers the attenuated hand which was extended to her, too much agitated to speak.

Could this be Oliver?

His complexion once so fresh and radiant, now deadly pale, his own clear merry blue eyes downcast and dim; his erect figure somewhat bowed and sunk, was completely enveloped in the long straight dark gown they wore in the Church; both Mrs. Howard and Mary shed tears as they silently drew closer to him in his sorrow.

Mary whispered that she trusted all bitterness towards herself personally was past and forgotten, adding in a trembling voice, "for I too have suffered, Oliver."

Calmly and slowly, without a shade of his former vehemence, he acknowledged that only himself had been to blame, for the many deep stains of his grievous sins had so degraded him that he was unfit to come to them as before; he was dead to all but the one hope of being permitted to devote his talent to the service of religion. He spoke quietly, neither raising nor lowering his voice, and seemed impassively resigned. How different to the bold buoyant youth of old was this apathetic remorseful Oliver!

The only time he showed any glimpse of feeling was in exhibiting Ernest's Bible, his constant companion, which he produced from the breast of his robe.

To his Aunt's earnestly expressed wish that he would visit them as of old, he returned a most positive refusal; he wished, he said, to live alone unknown, unloved, uncared for, such an existence his remorse exacted; his sole relaxation

henceforward would be to conduct the choir, and with this they were obliged, however unwillingly, for the present to be content, trusting to time and Mr. Fordholme's judicious counsels for some amelioration of his state.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FAR ABOVE ALL HEROISM OF THE SOLDIER IS
THE MARTYRDOM OF THE PRIEST.

YEARS have passed, bringing with them the changes ever consequent upon the lapse of time.

Mary's affection is toning down into a calm earnest feeling, an echo of happiness experienced once, and yet, she trusted, to be deathless and pure in the eternal home. Memory and hope were closely entwined; the former leaning back to the teeming past; the latter carrying her on to the sinless future. A woman capable of sacrificing thus her love to a strict sense of duty must bear about with her that music of the heart which all the turmoil of the world cannot quench. Victories of this kind are gained only through the instrumentality of our holy religion, by which power we are enabled to carry out such stern duties, and whose influence alone can consecrate a life sorrow, freeing it from all future regrets and concentrating the vigour of the mind on the one ceaseless imitation of Him who pleased not Himself.

As Mary herself once prophesied, she and her mother are growing old together; their household numbers but two, for affliction has not passed them by

in these years ; they mourn the head of the family, who died rather suddenly of a disease somewhat akin to that affection of the heart which carried off his youngest son.

Dr. Brereton was appointed executor of his will, in conjunction with Mrs. Howard, so that now he is their frequent guest ; relied on by both, their trusty counsellor, their tried friend and steady support in all difficulties, their unfailing resource throughout the tiresome business technicalities connected with the settlement of their property, which widows and orphans often find so tedious and harassing.

Charles and his wife are as flourishing as ever ; the latter showing many signs of inward improvement ; the sharp edges of her character wearing off by degrees ; the angles of envy and covetousness rounding into more benevolence and generosity. Mary is her great authority in most difficulties ; a consideration which she won by the humble withdrawal of her own claims whenever their interests were about to clash ; it is true, Julia has still an occasional fling at what she terms High Church doctrines and practice ; as, for instance, when with her old sneering sarcasm, she used to say she presumed if Hilary were to succumb under his zealous labours, the climax, so long warded off, would then arrive, and Mary would be able to testify her grief only by donning a fancy dress and appearing as a sister. But the latter knew too well wherein the indulgence of such a line of conduct would be most reprehensible, and gently observed, "That in any event whatever might be her private reservation with regard to future resolves, she would certainly follow out the teaching of the Church in practising the nearest duty first." On the whole, however, there is progress, and it is hopeful when persons begin uncon-

sciously to yield to the holy influence of a pure example.

Fanny, who is no longer a child, is under the care of a first-rate English governess, and as Mrs. Charles means her to eclipse any foregoing members of the family she is constrained to work hard; her rather severe hours of study are never encroached upon, be the excuse what it may; her grandmother tries sometimes to get up a little rebellion, but it is usually an abortive attempt. Aunt Mary can occasionally cause a diversion, which is only to be accounted for by the rarity of its occurrence; she herself owns, that however unwomanly it may seem, and however unnatural it really is, she does not like children, and is far too candid not to admit a fact, which certainly redounds but little to her credit; their presence jars upon her nerves sadly. Poor Mary! is it a shadow from the hard school through which she has passed; one can hardly expect she would have escaped such an ordeal entirely scatheless. But she is always willing to amuse them quietly, while the one lesson her tales inculcate, the one moral they point, is ever connected with the romance of her girlish life.

Kate's merry little ones (there is no further fear of the Musgrave family failing for want of heirs) seem perfectly to understand they must not expect with their aunt the boisterous romps they not unfrequently indulge in with their mother; tiny fingers are held up warningly, and lisping baby tongues caution one another to silence, for Aunt May will tell them a pretty fairy story, and by-and-by mamma will have a game at hide-and-seek; at which amusement Mary declares Kate makes more noise and is more uproarious than any of them.

The stories and allegories all resolve themselves into one great lesson of self-denial, whether

wreathed in the elegancies of fairyland, or clothed in homely cottage guise ; or, better still, connected with tales and events of the early Church. The little ones learn from her gentle teaching that one holy rule of life so admired by her dead brother, so closely followed up by him whose name never passes her lips, but whose memory is engraven on her heart.

Of the Huntleys there is little to be added ; poor Kisty remains in precisely the same state, occupying the same suite of apartments at Hilvington, wherein we left him established under the surveillance of old Mrs. Silvertown, whose infirmities are rapidly increasing. It is only quite lately she discovered the one secret he so exultingly refused to share with his wife relative to the disappearance of the gold and silver fish from the fountains.

The kingfishers were the culprits, she observed them surrounding the marble basin one morning, when, unable to rest, she was inhaling the freshness of the early dawn from her dressing-room window, their long legs and bills playing a conspicuous part in the picture as they greedily devoured the poor victims whom the water-lilies, which have since been placed there, were insufficient to protect.

Euphine continues her endless round of gaieties ; but now that youth has fled enjoyments that once promised unceasing pleasure, begin to pall : it is whispered that soon even the Huntley fortune, large as it is, will be considerably hampered, if nothing worse, from the constant drain occasioned by her sad gambling.

Mrs. Charles Howard is the authority for this information, the knowledge of which has so disgusted her that she is at infinite pains to avoid the company of her quondam inseparable, contenting herself with dropping a card at her door at intervals. The last report of the fashionable Mrs.

Huntley was the news of her departure from London to the German Spas.

Mr. Fordholme not long since presented himself in Harley Street with a very serious face. Oliver Bayley was really ill, but would not be persuaded to relax any of his usual duties, although unfit to be out of bed: his aunt immediately made her way to his bedside, where she was greeted with the most grateful affection. He lay there quiet and resigned, so painfully unlike the Oliver of old.

Around his bed, beautifully illuminated by his own hand, were hung the verses of the Fifty-first Psalm, *Miserere mei, Deus*, that his wandering eye might ever rest upon these inspired words, the great comfort of all transgressors, from the royal penitent downwards.

His sickness was long and painful; but by God's Blessing not fatal; he is still able to continue his much-loved avocation.

The regular services, that consolation which the Church provides for her distressed children, have in a measure allayed the bitterness of his poignant grief, although it has not deadened his repentance. Upon great occasions he is sometimes induced to visit his aunt and cousin, but always under protest; they are rejoiced to observe springing up now faint germs of that peaceful hope whose fruition will ensure rest to his troubled spirit.

Walter Wiltonthorpe makes Harley Street his home upon his rare visits to town: his parsonage is finished and inhabited by himself and two Curates. The dragons of heresy and schism have so long raised their hydra heads throughout that district that theirs is indeed at times uphill work; but they labour not in their own strength, being content to go on in a simple spirit of obedience, leaving results in the hands of the Most High. Their last work was the establishment of a Sister-

hood to help in their parish labours; the members as yet are few, but one of them is the lady in black we first observed at the first morning prayer after the Consecration of the Church of the Holy Trinity; she has thankfully availed herself of this haven of repose after a life of singular trial and hardship. She was a deserted wife, a disinherited daughter, a bereaved mother, having watched all her children sink one by one into an early grave; trials the justice of which she accepts as merited by disobedience, humbly trusting, in penitence and tears, that God will vouchsafe forgiveness hereafter. Walter's last visit to London was for the purpose of disclosing to the Howards the last tidings of their mutual friend.

It was on Ascension Day. Mary was making breakfast when a loud double knock startled her; at that early hour it was a most unusual thing; her ear strained to catch the cause, soon heard the sound of a well-known voice asking for the ladies. Was it possible? Walter away from his beloved church on that high festival, which she had been wont to hear him describe so eloquently, as the day which the world had stolen from the Church. What did it mean? A presentiment that his presence could have but one interpretation made her heart throb painfully. His hand was on the door, and in a moment he was at her side; one glance at his face told that his heart was heavy, notwithstanding his cordial greeting. Mrs. Howard appearing at the same instant, they all sat down to the morning meal, which was little tasted by two at least at the table. Nothing was said, but all were constrained, and Mary, fearing that no communication would transpire in her presence, made excuse of necessary household orders, to absent herself for a time. On her return Walter was alone; he placed her in the arm-chair by the fire-

side, saying he had that to tell which would try her sadly. Gently as he approached the subject her heart foreshadowed the truth.

He had received a letter from the Bishop of the diocese, announcing Hilary's death. The first page briefly stated the fact in a formal official sort of manner, but the closely written sheets sufficiently attested how untiringly the good prelate's pen had run on, in his endeavour to do justice to the memory of his faithful priest. One such missionary, he said, was a host in himself, indefatigable, unwearied, unswerving, no danger could appal, no difficulty subdue him. He had led a little devoted band to plant the standard of the Cross among a tribe of the most uncouth savages, until then wholly beyond the reach of Christian influence; the hardships, miseries, and toil they had undergone were incredible; within a few months all had succumbed, some from the effect of the climate, some from fatigue, all but their brave leader, he alone by God's help had had patience to endure, strength to resist, courage to continue the work single handed.

Cut off from the mission by the distance which separated them and the turbulent state of the intervening country, he had been without the means of communicating with his fellows; for months he had toiled on alone, fighting the battle of the Church against heathenism. By dint of extreme perseverance others had traced him out, but only in time to find him sinking literally from hard work.

The Bishop felt it was almost superfluous to tell his friends that he had sunk to his rest calmly and happily, in the sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection in Him for Whom he lived on earth.

Whether it was the instinct of the Aborigines, the letter went on to say, accustomed as they

were to give appropriate surnames, or whether it was one of the later arrivals who had translated his name, the Bishop could not tell, but Hilary was universally known among them by the title of the "Great Saint."

They had buried him solemnly at sunrise, under the shadow of one of their most luxuriant, wide-spreading trees, every human being for miles around attending the funeral. The natives had taken possession of his grave, and kept over it a sort of honourable guard; upon it were placed each day the choicest fruits, and the loveliest flowers.

His loss would occasion a void not easily filled up; there were many good and faithful who would do what they were commanded, but it was only one as wise and devoted as Hilary, who could do it in a really effectual manner. His earnest faith, zealous obedience, and humble patience, rendered him of inestimable value in mission work.

It was much to be lamented that, owing to the intestine warfare which had raged furiously among them, no one had been able as yet to follow in the footsteps of those devoted men, the first Christians who had pushed their way so far among these savage tribes. It would have assisted future efforts materially to have known Hilary's method of imparting knowledge, and to have followed out his plans, for they were a troublesome people to deal with; and the Bishop had already received tidings which caused him much anxiety, so much so indeed, that he felt it would be incumbent upon him to inspect personally that part of his diocese, previous to visiting England, which he contemplated doing early in the spring. He ended his rather long epistle by expressing a sincere hope that he should meet Mr. Wilonthorpe during his brief stay.

This last sheet Walter tore off, giving the other part to Mrs. Howard. Many anecdotes were related by the Bishop, to show how earnestly the poor savages strove to carry out the teaching of their beloved saint, affording another proof that the influence of a good man ceases not at his death; he, as the visible agent, may be removed, but the light of his example remains, and the path he trod in life will retain the track of his purity and goodness, as the western sky at evening continues so long to glow with the glory of the departed sun.

For a time Mary Howard seemed to droop under this final stroke, but she would not long indulge herself in even a semblance of repining. Once more she set her face towards the heavenly Jerusalem, and walked on bravely in the way of the Cross. His memory lay embalmed as a precious treasure in her heart, and ever before her was the bright sweet hope that she should see him on that day when the righteous shall shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their FATHER.



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